



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2018 FIA Formula One World Championship

Spanish Grand Prix

Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript

12.05.2018

DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

3 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

Conducted by Davide Valsecchi

Q: Lewis Hamilton, what a wonderful lap. How was your drive? Look at the atmosphere. Something incredible today.

Lewis HAMILTON: It's always a great atmosphere here in Barcelona; we always get a great crowd. There are a lot of British fans here, a lot of Spanish fans here, even, supporting a Brit, so I appreciate everyone. Yeah, very close in qualifying, but very happy. I needed this pole; I've not had a pole for a while.

Q: And your middle sector? Record in there, record for the circuit?

LH: I was trying to go for every sector's record but anyway; I'll take the middle one!

Q: Valtteri, first row for you, congratulations. How was it in there? It was tough this qualifying? For almost nothing you were on pole.

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, it was so close today, like it's been all weekend. It was good fun. I ruined my first run in Quali 3, so I had really one chance in the last run. I got a decent lap. It's a shame it's only four hundredths but the race is tomorrow and for us as a team, perfect result today.

Q: You're right. The race is tomorrow and maybe you can have a better chance?

VB: Yeah, of course. We will race hard and we'll try to get the one-two we deserved in Baku.

Q: Sebastian, congratulations, how was your quali? It was tough just at the end. You had such a big improvement on the last lap but maybe you missed just something?

Sebastian VETTEL: No maybe. I was happy with the lap. The first run in Q3 was not so good. I locked a little bit into the first corner. The last lap I was happy. It was feeling good until the end. Then I looked. You know you have the tower there, and I looked up and I saw my name didn't go to the top, so not entirely happy, but we expected Mercedes to be very strong, so I think tomorrow should be an interesting race.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, those were scintillating laps from you at the end of Q3 there. Talk us through it. You seem happier with the car here and of recent?

LH: Yeah, definitely. The team have been working so hard, so a huge thank you to everyone back at the factory and here for continuing to try to understand, to be open-minded. It's easy for us adults to get stuck in our ways and they have definitely let loose and [stayed] open-minded to think of new ways to try to improve, which is great, and that's what it takes to be a winning team. It was a very close qualifying; you could see all weekend it was close. The Ferraris were clearly sandbagging, just because they could. They've always had a quick car. But it took everything from us to get a result and to get a 1-2 in qualifying is fantastic for the team. I know everyone will be very, very happy. It was very, very close. Valtteri's been driving exceptionally well. I was just saying they should call him the 'Flying Finn'; he's definitely taken that role I think. We've got a lot of work to do tomorrow; it's going to be a tough race, but it's definitely a good way to start the weekend.

Q: Well done, Lewis, good luck tomorrow Valtteri, coming to you, so close, as Lewis said, in the end there but how much did that mistake on your first run in Q3 cost you, do you think?

VB: It's difficult to say. I think the last run in Q3 was fine. There were no mistakes or such, but of course if you can always do the lap together you will find a few hundredths. Extremely close all weekend. Lewis had a good qualifying and for us, like he said, it's the perfect result for tomorrow, so hopefully we can continue like this tomorrow.

Q: Well done. Sebastian, three consecutive pole positions coming into this race, but not this weekend. Just talk us through your session. Interesting to see you on the soft tyre?

SV: Yeah, overall I think it was a smooth session. Q1 was pretty good. The car was fine. We didn't have to do that much. Obviously we were quite OK this morning and we were trying to find the right direction. But it was straightforward in quali and in Q3 in the first run I locked up a little bit into Turn 1, so the first sector was already slow. I tried to get it back and recover but to really fight for pole I knew it was not enough. I didn't get a great feeling on that tyre, on that set. I asked to go back and I think it was the right call, we were very quick. I think the tyres this weekend are different because obviously we had the change, it's for everyone, but I think they are a bit harder. For me it was pretty straightforward as I said, because I was happier with the car with that tyre. If it's within one tenth, a tenth and a half you always think that maybe, but to be honest I was very happy with the lap until the end. So I think we expected Mercedes to be very strong and so they were. So hat's off to them and tomorrow I think it will be a close race. Anything can happen really, just like the last couple of races.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Lewis, you came into this weekend leading the championship, obviously Baku was the first win of the season for Mercedes. How important is this result, a 1-2 in qualifying, for the team and how much did you need it on a personal level as well?

LH: Well, we've had one pole. I don't think we've really had great qualifying sessions after that, so it was important for me to get back into a good position with qualifying, as it's usually a strength of mine. So definitely important and happy, especially considering I had such a busy week coming into this weekend to have this performance, I'm very happy with that. For the team it's been a struggle. I'm sure there have been a lot of people with nerves over the past few races, just not really understanding, constantly learning but feeling that we're not learning quick enough. So to come here and get the 1-2 in qualifying is a true show of all the hard work that everyone is doing.

Q: (Pilar Celebrovsky– Paddock Magazine) My question is for Sebastian. How crucial is it to do a good start to take the lead – considering this circuit is not really easy to overtake?

SV: Well, good memories of last year but I was in the first row. I think it's the same as always. You need to have a good start to keep your position; you need to have a great start to make positions up. Obviously here's a long run to Turn One so P3 is not a bad place to be it. It's not Russia, is it, Valtteri? No. But yeah, it's still a pretty long run. We'll see. First focus on the start and then we'll see. It's a long race after that. I think the tyres will be a challenge so even if the start doesn't go in our favour I think we have a strong car after that to keep fighting. So, we'll see.

I still have nightmares from Russia.

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport-Magazin.com) Question for all three of you. It looks pretty strange for us because usually Mercedes has some problems to extract the maximum out of the softest compound tyre, today you were pretty strong on that. Ferrari was quite the opposite. Do you have an explaining for that? Seb mentioned thinner tyres this weekend. Is it related to this or is it special track surface we have here, track layout or...?

LH: I couldn't tell you. I have no idea.

Valtteri?

VB: Going into today, I think we saw that the gaps between the tyres here on this track, with the new tarmac, has been really small, like we saw in testing. We saw the same yesterday but today suddenly we could work the supersoft a bit better, so it felt like a better tyre for us. It's still marginal, the gain, but... I don't know.

Seb, you touched on this earlier...

SV: Yeah, I think it's pretty straightforward. The tyres are different. They are different for everyone so everyone needs to cope with that. I think it was exceptional that Mercedes were struggling in the last events as much as they were – but thinner tread, basically the tyre is harder, so, we still have the same tyres, if you look at the colours, but they are harder than they used to be. Yeah, as I said, it's the same for all of us.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, your best qualifying result today for the season, how about the best result for the race tomorrow?

VB: Yeah. The qualifying was good. Not perfect but close. So, it was OK and, for us as a team, it's perfect. And yes, of course, I hope for a good race tomorrow because I have some catching up to do overall in the season if we look at the points. So, like every race, I want to do as well as I can. I feel really good at the moment in the car. I think race pace-wise we will be strong, so hopefully a good result.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesporte.com) To all drivers. All of you are saying you're having problems with the tyres. What is it, exactly? Do they not reach the temperature? Go over temperature? Graining? They have blisters? Also Lewis, you used the supersoft at the end of Q2 after registering your time on soft tyres, and also you got the best time on supersoft in Q3. All weekend until now you didn't have a so-good lap with supersoft.

LH: It's because it's a constant learning process – but these tyres, they seem to have the smallest working window. Whether you give us more rubber or less rubber, they appear to be a lot harder than last year. I know they went softer but I think it's more so because the working range is far narrower than it was last year – and so you give it everything on an out-lap and you still don't have your tyres in the window. And they heat the tyres up in the blanket. This year they're just too hard. That's why everyone struggles. I don't understand why they worked in Australia and haven't worked ever since and today we have them working. Yeah, let's hope... I was saying to Valtteri, when we get to Monaco we're going to just be driving around on cold tyres because it's not very easy to get your temperatures up there.

Valtteri, do you think the cooler track temperatures today, compared to yesterday, helped Mercedes?

VB: I don't think so. We were pretty strong yesterday also with the warmer track so I don't think that helped. It changes always the approach, like Lewis mentioned, the operating window of the tyres is so small you just need to try and hit it, even though the track temp is 10°C less. It's extremely difficult but I think this weekend so far we've done a good job and also finding out how to work the supersoft today. Hopefully we can master them tomorrow as well. We'll see.

Sebastian, anything you want to add?

SV: No. I like your question but I don't want to answer!

LH: They have the secret.

SV: Exactly.

Sebastian, would you have preferred a hotter track temperature today?

SV: I don't know. I think, to be honest, if you think of how much effort goes into the car, performance, engineering, to get everything out of your package, and then, like Lewis said, there's the element of 'who knows?' yeah, I don't think up to today Mercedes understood in China exactly what went wrong. For us it was working, and then one event to the other, one day to the other it can be a different picture. That's nothing new, I think we had it for a long time now. That's how it goes. It's good if you are on the side that it's working and not so good if you are on the side that it doesn't work. Hard to find a true explanation every time. So irrelevant, I think, today the temperatures.

Q: (Ralf Bach – AutoBild Motorsport) Valtteri and Lewis, do you think that Pirelli changed – not the colours but the compounds - to help Mercedes?

LH: When?

VB: I think the compounds are the same, just the tread of the tyre is smaller.

Q: Yes Valtteri, I think you're correct. Do you have anything to say about Pirelli wanting to help Mercedes?

VB: I don't think so, why would they want to help us?

LH: That would be nice. That was a stupid question really, so I don't really have an answer for it.

Q: (Roksana Cwik - Swiatwyscigow.pl) This year we have a new tarmac, can you tell us if it's easier for you to drive on the track or harder, compared to last year?

SV: Well, I think for us it was not necessary. It is a bit faster but I think it's not us that asked for it, I think it's the MotoGP. For us, I think they could have saved the money and put it somewhere else.

Q: Lewis, how did you find the new asphalt; I mean pole position is so much faster than your pole here last year. Did it feel pretty spectacular?

LH: The grip... it's a strange one because it's very smooth so a little bit of the character is taken away, being that it's brand new. It didn't need to be resurfaced but they obviously had the money to spend and resurface it. It is great that we are faster but it has a different characteristic than we had in the past but that's not necessarily a bad thing. We drive here a lot in practice and obviously with the rest every year so it is kind of neat that the track gains new characteristics as you go through the years. I don't really know why every track is different when they resurface it. I don't know if it's less expensive tarmac bitumen that they use or expensive stuff or not expensive stuff, I don't know. It varies from track to track but I guess that's what makes it exciting.

Q: Similar asphalt here to Paul Ricard and Silverstone this year. Valtteri, how's the track been rubbering in?

VB: I think pretty standard track improvement during the weekend so nothing special on that, very normal.

Q: (Joe van Burik – Autocar NL) Considering Lewis's pole time is three seconds quicker than last year, how bad is it in 2019 that the car will be an estimated 1.5s a lap slower?

SV: Is that a fact?

LH: That's what they said, yeah, something like that.

SV: Really?

LH: I don't think it's particularly... I think in the sport and in technology we're developing and moving forwards all the time to pull us back. I don't think if that's a particularly... it's not going to make any difference if you make it... if you make us three seconds slower or a second and a half slower, it's not going to make the racing any better and we just want to go faster, we want to improve technology, we want to push the boundaries and the limits. One of the exciting things this year has been that we are breaking records. Sebastian was just saying about the... what year was it?

SV: Well, before they introduced the chicane, I think they were doing high fiftens.

LH: It's incredible the technology we have and what we're doing with it. We should be at least as fast as we are this year but just making racing better. In my personal opinion.

SV: Yeah, I agree, I think... I find it a bit comical: why, in 2009 we went, let's go less aerodynamics and better racing and so on? In fact I think it didn't change too much. Then we said the cars are too slow, let's put more aerodynamics and make them wider, more spectacular. All the drivers' feedback was thank you very much, spectacular, that's what we would like, more challenging, you see us more exhausted after the race, and now we want to make them slower again. It's a bit like cruising to America and changing direction 100 times.

LH: Is it the same people making the decisions every time, the same group, making the decision every time the rules go... not necessarily the best?

Q: It's with the intention of improving overtaking next year.

SV: I think you should ask us what we need to overtake.

LH: We should make the decisions.

SV: I mean we are drivers, not to say that we know everything, we don't anything about engineering the car but we know how the cars feel, how to drive the cars. And their limitations to overtake. But we're not really asked.

Ends