



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2016 Chinese Grand Prix Sunday Race Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

1 – Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes)

2 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

3 – Daniil KVIAT (Red Bull)

PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Kai Ebel)

Congratulations, Nico, amazing gap, fantastic race, but just tell me why could Daniel Ricciardo pass you at the start?

Nico ROSBERG: Ni hao, hello China. Yeah, the start was not quite good enough, Daniel got a good one. But then I had a really quick car today, so I was feeling great, I attacked him straight away and I managed to pull a great gap after that.

Lots of action, most of them behind you, so have you been aware of what happened in your back?

NR: No, I didn't see anything, I had no idea. I just knew the gap and I just know that I just had to try to extend it as much as possible and I'm happy that worked out?

I see those guys are still arguing, so coming over to you Seb. Seb, right after the start you crashed into your team-mate. Very spectacular and then you said, well, Daniil was coming out like a madman. Do you still think so?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, well, obviously it's difficult to judge how it looked from his point of view, but my start wasn't so great, so I was a bit on the back foot into turn one and then I think Kimi locked up, went a bit wide, I wanted to go on the inside to overtake him. I think Daniil was trying to do the same thing with me, but then Kimi came back and I had to sort of be in the middle. He was coming with a lot of speed into that gap. I was very surprised, so I had to steer some sort of left. At the same time Kimi was coming across and there was no way, so we made contact, which is a shame because you don't want the same cars, same colour touching each other. In the end we were lucky – I could continue, he could continue, but surely not the best result for the team, so sorry for that. But after, it was a very entertaining race, a lot of cars that I had to overtake; it was good fun. I think the car was great this afternoon, so a big thanks to all the team, and all the

Chinese fans. I think they have been fantastic once again, great support for all of us, you feel really, really special when you come here with so much attention, so Xièxie, thank you.

Just a short word from Seb! So Dany I guess you have the right to give an answer to what happened at the start, your rocket start?

Daniil KVIAT: Well, yeah, I mean, vice versa to Seb I had a really good start. You see the gap, you go for it on the inside, you see one car, usually it's hard to see both cars... yeah, it was a risky move of course, I agree with Seb, but these kind of moves can bring you a podium, so I'm on the podium, he's on the podium, it's fine. I will keep on risking like this and everyone should expect that!

At least you can shake your hand again together, that's good news? So Seb, in Formula One everyone is talking about aerodynamics, then you lost almost your full front wing, but why didn't you change when you pitted later on, why didn't change the front wing again then?

SV: We did.

No, no, but you later carried on with a front wing which was damaged?

SV: As far as I remember, obviously the safety car came, I wanted to see how bad it is. I can see now the front wing is damaged...

I told you.

SV: Maybe I damaged it later on again.

With Bottas, exactly.

SV: OK, so I didn't even see that, which didn't help. But I had, when I made contact with Kimi I felt that the car wasn't 100% and then we changed the nose in the first stop and then I damaged it obviously again, which I didn't see! Yeah, but it was still OK, the pace looked alright, so overall a great recovery.

OK, right, now you know Seb. So coming back to the winner again. Nico, I know after Mexico you had a fantastic party on a plane, so they almost kicked you out of the plane for partying, so what kind of party you will have tonight on the flight back home to Germany.

NR: We're going to party now in the garage. That's going to great fun, because everybody in the team deserves it so much and then straight back home to my family, can't wait to see them.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Nico, that's your second career win in China, 17 career wins, sixth win in a row, third win this season. How long can it continue?

NR: I'm happy with today, of course, it was a great weekend for me here in China. It's a special place for me, first pole, first win here. It's great and it really was a pleasure to drive today out there. Seldom had such a great feeling out there. And everything worked out well, the strategy and everything. The tyres held up pretty well, so I'm really pleased.

Q: You were on the radio complimenting the team on the balance you had. You were 37s ahead at the end of the race, it looked like it was a controlled race after the start. You had a little bit of an issue there.

NR: Yeah, the start, it wasn't too bad, my start, but Daniel got an even better one – but then I was a lot quicker and especially him on a supersoft when his tyres started to degrade and I could just fly past him. I didn't expect it to be that easy. [Vettel interjects] Oh, he had something at the beginning? And then after that I was just pushing to try to get the best gap possible and I'm glad that it worked out so well.

Q: Sebastian, obviously you had your issues at the start of the race which you talked about on the podium – but after that it was a terrific recovery to come back through the pack. Maybe talk us through how difficult it was given that you had shipped some damage.

SV: Well I was obviously disappointed that I made contact in lap one. Lucky that the car was still intact. I was reporting to the team, initially I thought I had to box straight away but it was actually OK. The steering wheel was a little bit off-centre, so had a bit of damage all through the race. It was actually more difficult in left-handers than right-handers. Fortunately there's more right-handers here. If it was the other way around could have been a bit more difficult but yeah, I think the Safety Car helped. Then we had a different strategy to most people with the supersoft tyre which helped me to clear the traffic and make good progress – which was fun. A lot of cars. I didn't count but it felt like a lot! They just kept coming – but we managed to clear them, which was obviously essential. Then with Daniil in the end, the last car to pass was a bit more tricky. He was quite good at the end of the stint with his soft tyres but then we knew that he would pit to a medium tyre and we still had a new set of softs. So we tried to be as close as possible, which worked. I was gaining a bit on the way into the pits, then on the outlap able to jump him, which was obviously important to get P2. So yeah, incredible recovery, which at that point, when you make contact in Turn One, you know things cross your mind, that it might just all be lost from here and the race just has just started – but very, very happy with the recovery. Good that we had both cars as well in the finish. Obviously terribly sorry for Kimi but there wasn't anything I could have done differently. I was a bit in the sandwich of Kimi on the left and Daniil on the right. Bit unfortunately but afterwards was good fun. I think the car was good today and P2 was probably the maximum. So, very glad it worked out and the strategy for tonight, I think I had to work a little bit harder than Nico, so I think he has to drink the double amount compared to me and maybe I get him at the bar.

Q: Dany, coming to you, your first podium since Hungary last year, it comes just before your home race, how encouraging is it for you to set the pace you set today?

DK: Well, first of all it feels excellent to finish on the podium. After Hungary it felt like a quite long time. So yeah, you always want to see the result and today it confirmed itself. Yeah, the start went well, corner one, corner two was a bit risky obviously. In the end we can talk about it forever but it paid off and I'm on the podium so it feels good. The race itself was quite controlled. Obviously I think our main competitor through the whole race was Sebastian. I think he made an excellent recovery. We probably missed out a little bit not having a soft tyre in the end for the last stint and on the medium we couldn't really resist for too long to him. And yeah, he overtook us. But all in all, it was a very encouraging weekend. We are consistently third-fastest team on the track and I think with a bit of development in the future we can give a fight to these guys even a bit more. It's all looking quite promising for the future.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Bernard Bernke – Bild) Seb, you overtook two cars on the way to the pits, that looked like a close one. Could you tell us what exactly happened there?

SV: I'm allowed to overtake so I don't know what happened to Force India, I don't know who it was. It was very slow and the Toro Rosso decided to queue so I decided to go halfway over the grass and jump both of them. Obviously we had to change the nose so we lost the positions again but we're free to race in the pit entry. It looks like I was the only one to remember, which was good.

Q: (Keren Wang - Top Driver) Seb, obviously you didn't realise the damage on the front wing after contact with Bottas, but did it even have a little effect on the balance of the car?

SV: I think it did. It's not ideal when bits are missing but it wasn't huge, to be honest, plus the fact that the car was sort of damaged from lap one, it was a little bit difficult to distinguish but I think the fact that it was alright, also for looking alright in terms of the numbers, the team decided to keep the nose and keep going. I was very aggressive, I think I damaged it into turn three. I thought I was just OK but obviously I was surprised when Kai mentioned on the podium that my front wing was damaged. I looked down and I was a bit surprised myself. I think, in the end, with the contact I had in turn one or two I was very lucky to be able to continue anyway. It was a big hit with Kimi and as I said, the steering wheel was a little bit off-centre for the whole race. I got used to it but surely not ideal.

Q: (Vincent Willtet - Host) I was wondering, what can you learn from this race, going forward and what do you plan on improving for the next races?

DK: Like I said before, overall it was quite an encouraging race. I thought we were close in our pace to Ferrari; through the race we were challenging them but we had to fit medium which is the stiffer compound compared to soft. When we both were on the soft, I think our pace was very similar and obviously Mercedes is still a bit of a step ahead but with the developments in the future races, probably around Canada, I think we can make a bit of a step forward. In some circumstances, I think we can be quite a big challenge to them and today, after the contact at turn one my car was also quite damaged. I don't know at the moment how much, I still haven't spoken to the team but there was a side pod damaged and I could see some pieces flying away. I still have to discover how much it was but all in all today the race was promising and we are on the right way.

NR: What we take away is that we are still the quickest car out there at the moment but I think Ferrari really haven't shown what they can do yet. They have had so many issues in the first three races so we need to keep on it and keep pushing because I think they are much closer than they have shown but we will push and I'm looking forward to the next races and I think we're going to go well there as well.

Q: Is that what you take away from these first three races?

SV: Yeah, definitely. I think obviously I only had two races and the two races I had were OK. Obviously there was a chance to win in Australia, we didn't take it, fair enough but obviously today, with a bit of luck, a strong recovery for both cars after what happened on the first lap, so overall not the smoothest road to Russia. Hopefully we had a more solid weekend there. Last year the car felt pretty good, I think we made a step forward with the whole car and power unit so quite confident for Russia, a couple of bits coming so it should be a bit stronger and hopefully we will have a smooth weekend.

Q: (Oleg Karpov – motorsport.com) Dany, are you confident you could have managed to keep Seb behind if you had had another set of softs?

DK: Obviously when we were both on soft tyres it all felt quite controlled. We obviously had very similar pace, I thought, but I was controlling him and obviously it was quite close but then once we pitted for mediums and Seb had softs, obviously, I could straight away feel him on my gearbox and

he managed to pass me quite easily on the straight with DRS and then it was hard to keep up, even though we thought maybe we had a chance at the end with a bit better degradation but we didn't so probably having another (set of) softs would have helped us but all those are ifs and buts - however he's P2 and I'm P3.

Q: (Oleg Karpov – motorsport.com) Seb, were you cautious before the last pit stop, were you not giving your maximum given that you knew that he would have to go for medium tyres?

SV: We sort of guessed that he had a set of mediums on hand and not a set of softs. I was probably expecting him to jump into the pits a bit earlier to avoid us going for the undercut. In the end we came in on the same lap so maybe I was a little bit too close too early. A couple of laps before the stop I was actually within DRS range and then lost a little bit of contact. Obviously it's never easy when you are following about a second(behind) so at that point lost the fronts a little bit and he was opening the gap up a little bit more and just before the stop then I was able to close in again a little bit but obviously we came in at the same time and it was a race in the pit lane and a race for the different crews which was quite fun and then I knew that I had the advantage on tyre warm-up and performance, especially on the first lap so I went for it as hard as I could and it paid off. I knew that afterwards it gets a little bit more tricky to just follow him, even though the tyres were quicker. Once I was ahead I just tried to control the gap until the end.

Q: (Alwin Chew – China Daily) Many people have said in recent years that there's a lack of a buzz for the Chinese Grand Prix. Can I just find out from the drivers what did you think of the crowd turn-out today, the general atmosphere and how do you find the Chinese fans?

NR: The grandstand was full today so that's great to see and every driver has their section, you know, which is a good fun and I can also tell you that the lobby of the hotel is completely packed every evening and every morning, so I think the enthusiasm here for our sport is really great and I'm happy to see how all of you Chinese fans are so excited that we're here to race and to watch us race here.

SV: Fairly simple: I would say best fans in the world, great to see full grandstands. I think it's a massive honour to stand on the pit straight or the main straight when we're about to start the race, looking left and seeing so many people being excited, so many German flags for myself, for Nico, for the other German drivers and generally the enthusiasm is great. It's fantastic to see that people enjoy what we are doing so much. It makes us feel very very special. It's a great pleasure to come every year. I think I've been coming for eleven years now and I think it's just getting better so a big big thank you. I think it's a massive privilege and it's the days that you remember one day when you retire. I hope that I won't retire too soon but I think stuff like that when you come back and people screaming and just smiling at you I think is really what you take beyond apart from the silverware which is nice but it's really the emotions and the enthusiasm that people transfer onto you, the positiveness, the smiles, so a big big thank you to the fans and already looking forward to coming back next year.

DK: Well obviously I back up what these guys said. China has always been very passionate fans. As a track it offers good opportunities for racing. The weather can sometimes be unpredictable which makes it a bit more unpredictable and yeah, these kind of things make racing exciting. Today we saw those combinations on the first laps of the corners... there are so many trajectories to be taken which can offer great racing. The fans are always there supporting you which feels really great.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – Top Driver) Nico, is this the best start you've ever had in any of your Grand Prix seasons and do you think you are at the peak of your career at the moment?

NR: Well, it's too early to make any summaries, you know? It's three races now and they've gone really well for me but it's the longest season in F1 history with 21 races so that's 18 to go or whatever it is. It would not make sense to make any premature conclusions if the start was good or bad, let's wait and see. Of course I'm happy with the way it's gone and I'm feeling good and the car's there but I don't want to say more than that. Let's see. Of course Lewis is not many points behind, I don't know, something like 30 points, that's not much, that's a race and a bit and he's as focused and motivated as ever. He will never give up and he's the benchmark, he's been the benchmark for the last years so the battle is going to be a big battle as always.

Ends