

FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2016 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix Sunday Race Press Conference Transcript

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PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by David Coulthard)

Q: Lewis, you're 53rd victory in Formula One but I suspect this is a slightly different feeling to some of the others?

Lewis HAMILTON: Honestly, I feel great. Firstly, I want to say a big thank you to everyone that came out to support us. I've got so many British fans out here this weekend. Thank you so much, I love you guys. Thank you to all my family for all their support and especially to the team for doing such a great job. It's been a real privilege being part of this team and achieving the success we've had this year. I never would have thought when I joined this team that I would have that many wins. I think that's 32 wins with this team so a big thank you to everyone here and back at the factory. And a big congratulations to Nico, of course, his first world championship. Good job, man.

Q: Allow me to get out of the way when you are doing the handshake. Well done [Nico] you're nice and wet. I don't want to force anything but maybe you could do the handshake again. There you go, there's the love. Nico, just another day at the office?

NR: Hell, no! That was definitely not the most enjoyable race I've ever had. With Max in the beginning and then with those guys coming up in the end, really not very enjoyable those last few laps. Very, very glad it's over and unbelievably ecstatic. What do you call it when you give the win to my wife, to you [Vivian], amazing, thank you for all the support and to our daughter Alaïa...

Q: Don't you cry on us, Nico!

NR: Oh, I'll thank everybody else afterwards... unreal.

Q: I can see the tears and we understand why. We do have to wait until a week on Friday until you are announced as champion but this time 34 years ago this was a similar time for the Rosberg family?

NR: Yeah, very, very proud to have done the same feat as my dad achieved, he's going to be coming in about half an hour I think, so it will be exciting to see him.

Q: Fantastic, well Nico, we'll come back to you. We;'ll leave you with those thoughts. Now, Sebastian Vettel – it's been a while, you've not been here since Monza. Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, we've aged!

Q: I have, you look wonderful. Where have you been? Why has it taken this long? That was an amazing strategy and you really came back and pushed these guys hard.

SV: Well, before I answer your questions, congratulations [Nico]... it was tough out there in the last couple of laps. I didn't want to be in his shoes. I was trying to get close and have another go because I was thinking to, why not pass both of them, if Lewis is going that slow in front? But it was difficult because my tyres were also dropping more to the end. But you mentioned the strategy obviously. Bit stuck at the beginning of the race, couldn't really unfold my pace, I was starting to get a bit frustrated but once I had clean air I could really also on the old tyres unleash the pace we had today. The whole team deserves the podium today. I think we have worked so hard. We have had so much criticism this year – sometimes right, sometimes not justified – but that's how it goes, it's a tough game, we're fighting really tough opponents. It's been a tough year but it's nice to finish on a high and I think we take that momentum into next year. There is a lot of work going on back in Maranello, so big thanks also to everyone there.

Q: Just coming back in, Lewis, you're a man who wears his heart on his sleeve, your face doesn't lie. We've seen you celebrate some victories... tell us a little bit your thoughts, your emotions right now on where you are today?

LH: Well, I did everything I could these last four races and that's really all I could ask of myself. I leave here... I'm going to have a lot of fun tonight, celebrating with the team and everyone and you can't win them all. Obviously we had a lot of problems this year, and that's inevitably why I'm in this position but I'm still grateful for all the success and the ups and downs we had as a team.

Q: Well, congratulations on this victory. Nico, coming back to you: you're holding it but you want to unleash those tears don't you?

NR: No, it's OK. I also want to say congrats to Lewis, you did a great season, great competitor, massively quick always. Congrats, always tough to beat you. Guys, at the team Mercedes, please put the music on, I'm coming down in one second. And my mom, I'm really looking forward to seeing her, she's going to be coming with dad in a second, so whole family together it's going to be wonderful.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, congratulations on the strong end to your season. Fairly straightforward grand prix for you really until the final laps when obviously... you were saying in the press conference earlier in the weekend that it was difficult to back the pack up but tell us your thinking in the final part of the grand prix?

LH: Yeah, obviously happy with the win, it was relatively easy to get the win in the end. Great job by the team throughout the weekend and through the year so big thank you to everyone there. I knew being in the lead I knew I was losing the world championship, I was hoping that Sebastian... I heard the pace he was on and I knew I could do that pace exactly, so I was hoping that he would close up,

but I guess he said his tyres were going off towards the end and Nico drove well to not make mistakes.

Q: How do you feel then about the season, looking back?

LH: Good. I did everything that I could, particularly towards the end and obviously Nico had a very, very clean year without any real issues to be honest and that's why we sit in this position right now. But he did a fantastic job, so big congratulations to him, it's a great feeling to win the world championship and I look forward to fighting with him next year.

Q: Thank you. Coming to you Nico, many congratulations. Obviously a critical point in the race for you was the overtake on Max Verstappen. You were told by your engineer it was critical to pass him and it was very, very close. A heart in the mouth moment for you?

NR: For sure. The feelings out there in that battle with Max... unreal, really unreal. I hope I don't experience that again any time soon. And the same again at the end, you know: pressure on from behind, Lewis driving slow at the front. It was a tough one.

Q: You've had your emotions and your whole psychology so locked down, you've talked about going one race at a time. Now it's all over, what was it like? Really, on the inside, mentally?

NR: It's crazy. The thing is it was so intense – the race – it's still going to take some time I think to settle it and come out because it was really intense out there and so tough in the end. Those last couple of laps with those two guys behind. If I dropped being them it's over so not enjoyable.

Q: Very well done. Sebastian, Ferrari have been criticized a number of times on the strategy front but today they absolutely aced it. Brilliant tactic – long second stint, attacking on the supersofts, tell us your feelings and particularly your decision-making process in the last couple of laps? SV: Well, in the last couple of laps it was clear. It was clear we would be able to make big progress but before it was difficult. Obviously with Max coming back, staying out so long, coming back to fight for the last podium spot, or the same positions as the group of Kimi, Daniel, myself, made it tricky. Then Max pulled in very early. That was one way to do it and the other way was to go long. When I was behind the two cars of Kimi and Daniel I was trying to save my tyres and trying to stay

in reach but still having enough tyres to make it longer and once they pulled in it was clear that we would go long. Then I think those laps were really critical. Fortunately I had some tyres left and I could really make that count with consistent laps. I didn't lose too much versus the group that had pitted already. Once I came out the question was 'how long are these cars going to last' and it proved to be just enough. Daniel was fairly straightforward to pass, but then when I arrived behind Max, the problem is that you have car after car after car and you begin to slide, so my tyres got worse. Then I was behind Nico and I was faster, but I think also due to the fact that Lewis was slowing down. I tried everything but they were very, very quick down the straights. I think with the Red Bulls it was a little bit easier. I think also, Max didn't have DRS, whereas at the end I think Nico had DRS. The second straight was the spot I was having a look, but Nico defended well and closed the inside so I couldn't really go anywhere. I couldn't try something really stupid because Lewis was just ahead, so if I really dived down the inside or down the outside then I have a risk of hitting Lewis at that point. It as critical and I also saw Max coming back in the mirrors but for sure the last laps were intense, I was thinking also at some point to win the race as well, because I think the chance was there, but both of them did their job well at the end. Nevertheless, as you said, happy with the podium.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Lewis this season you took your fans and everyone on quite a rollercoaster of a ride. For the millions of fans that watched you along the way, you had some incredible drives and you also achieved quite a few goals, with that are your able to take those positives heading into the off-season?

LH: Most definitely. There have been a lot of great things that have happened this year. One in particular is the bond and relationship I have with my mechanics and engineers – my new mechanics – that joined my side of the garage. They did a fantastic job all year long. I think the working relationship has been better than ever, particularly going through all those experiences. There's that and I was generally quickest most of the year, so it's definitely been a positive, a lot of positives to take from it. So I take that into next season.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) How much was [it] annoying [you] the box asking you to improve your pace and aren't you afraid that the relationship with the team now is a little bit more cold?

LH: Not really. I don't know why they didn't just let us just race. There was never a moment where I felt I was going to lose the race. It's a shame that they wouldn't but it's quite clear their through process and yeah I mean I don't really have much to say.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Lewis you said there was never a moment you were afraid of losing the race but you probably knew Sebastian was on different tyres, were you not afraid that maybe it could catch you out with his tyre advantage?

LH: There was never a moment that I felt that I was risk, so no.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) Lewis, you just said there was never a moment you were afraid of losing the race – but you probably knew that Sebastian was on different tyres. Were you not afraid that maybe it can catch you out with his tyre advantage. LH: As I said, there was never a moment that I felt I was at-risk, so no.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – AP) Question for Lewis. To follow up on that, do you find it an inconvenience... do you find it a bit annoying that you receive instructions like that a few laps from the end when you're under intense pressure in a title race? Could you do without that?

LH: Not really – because it wasn't really intense to be honest. It was pretty chilled at the end. There was not much... maybe intense for you but it wasn't intense for me. No. For me it's... I'm in a position where I've obviously had a lot of points lost during the season so for me, I'm out there fighting and I generally never try to do anything to harm the team or the brand or anything like that. But we've won the Constructors' Championship so it was down to me and Nico today. And however, they still felt they needed to make comments and so... well, y'know, we'll discuss it afterwards as we always do as a team and pull back in. But we can't let that overshadow the fact that Nico's just won a Championship and the team has dominated all year long, we'd had more wins than any other team I think in the past maybe. So, we cannot ignore that fact that it's been an incredibly successful year.

Q: (Jens Nagler – Bild) Question to Sebastian. Could you have even more pushed on Nico in the last couple of rounds?

SV: Well I did what I could, obviously. At that point, you follow two cars, you slide, the tyres start to go too hot. I was struggling with my fronts at that point so it was difficult to stay close. So I did what I could. As I said, Lewis was probably a bit too close otherwise I could have had a better look. Nico defended well. Turn 11 was the spot where maybe I could have had a chance, and then maybe I could have had a chance and then towards the last laps he had always the tow also from the car in front, from Lewis. Without the tow, I think I could have had a better chance but that way it was impossible. My interest as soon as I passed Max was to win the race – but bearing in mind obviously that they are fighting for the Championship and... I mean we could all feel and see what was going on. Lewis was trying to back Nico up into the rest of the pack...

LH: Just trying to help you out buddy!

SV: Yeah, I'm sure you would have waved me past as well. As I said, my main interest was in winning the race but I couldn't get past both of them.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesport.com) Lewis, when you realised that Nico had difficulties to overtake Max, did you think maybe you have more chance to win the Championship?

LH: Not really. I think that that point I didn't really know... I didn't have a lot of information from the team in terms of what I was supposed to do so I pushed a little bit, got a little bit of a gap. I was obviously just take care of my race – but I didn't know if I needed a ten second lead or less. So, I just tried to look after my tyres and get to my target, which I did. And then I saw that Nico had passed and picked up his pace which was good, and at that point I tried to pick up my pace also.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta Dello Sport) Question to Lewis. Lewis do you really think it's fair to slow down the race on purpose only to push you team colleague into troubles. Only in terms of being fair.

LH: I don't think I did anything dangerous today. So, I don't feel I did anything unfair. We're fighting for a championship, I was in the lead, I control the pace. That's the rules.

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Sebastian, in a different condition, without the Championship deciding this last race, you could try something else? And when, during the race, when said by radio "it's four laps that I'm asking to do something," because in that moment you didn't have clear picture of the race? You change something in the strategy during the race?

SV: Well, you have a plan but then, to be fair, you never know how the race unfolds. Obviously we are all starting from the grid, you might change position first corner, first lap. So the plan is flexible. I think you know what to do, you know where you can go with which tyre, etcetera, but from where I was obviously I was stuck. It was very difficult to make progress because the car in front of me had a tow from another car, so obviously Daniel was behind Kimi and therefore it was difficult for me to really get close and overtake. I was probably a bit quicker but not enough – and it's also not the easiest track to overtake. And then I was asking to do something and at the same time Max dived into the pits and then that opportunity was gone, because it was really going for an aggressive

undercut, going very long on the harder tyres, or the soft tyres. When that door closed obviously it was clear that Kimi will come in next, and Daniel, because they were battling each other and then I decided, we decided to go on the supersoft tyre, try to do something different which turned out to be the right thing. And at the end, could I have done more? I don't think so. As I said, I was running out of tyres, I think. I have also one comment to make. I think, in my point of view, you don't win the Championship by luck. Nico won the Championship today. He's a deserved champion. You collect a lot of points throughout the season, sometimes you might have, yeah, fortunate situations, unfortunate situations with your car but I think there's been other situations in the past with other drivers, that's the way it goes. Sometimes you have better years in this regard, sometimes worse years but I think today is Nico's day and it's a sign of respect and greatness to give him that. I think we owe it to him, he's a deserved champion.

QUESTIONS TO NICO ROSBERG

Q: (Ysef Harding, Xero Xone News) Nico, now that you've won this championship, can you convey to your fans, who was driving you, who was pushing you, who was giving you the energy and the strength to get through this season and win this championship?

NR: It's everybody who's supporting me in the world. It's all the people watching on TV who support me, all the people who come to the races, even this weekend, a lot of Germans out there and from the whole world, supporting me through the whole weekend. That's really, really special. It's a special feeling, a very unique feeling. I'm very thankful to all of them. And then of course the people closer to me. It's my whole team, which is my racing family. I joined Mercedes in 2010 and it was a rough ride initially and now it's come good in the last years and now it's come good for me today – and that's very, very special also. So, big thanks to my racing family, to Mercedes, to my family, to all of my team around me, working around me. Everybody has there part in this. It's such a long way to get to today, really. My go-karting engineer from when I was ten was writing me last night, memories from ten years old, fighting for the French championship, stories of motivation he was sending me yesterday, so it's just all the way from there, every year it builds up to this success today. Even all those people through my career. I had a lot of important mentors in that sense. All the way through. If this is the moment to mention them, I will. It's Serge Dino in go-karting, then in cars it was Team Rosberg and Peter Sieber and Erich Baumgärtner in Formula 3. Arno Zensen, Team Rosberg. After that came GP2 where it's Nicolas Todt, Fred Vasseur, big thanks to them for getting me into F1, and Steve Marcel who unfortunately passed away. After that F1, Williams, Frank Williams, Sam Michael, Patrick Head, to get me into F1. And after that, what come after that? The people that took me to Mercedes, that was Norbert Haug and Ross Brawn, Nick Fry, thanks to all of you to get me into Mercedes. That was the beginning of the story, and then of course Toto, massive thanks to Toto and Paddy and Niki for continuing it on and taking me to where I am today.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Congratulations Nico. On Thursday Lewis said that the last night of 2014 was awful for him and he didn't sleep. How was that weekend for you and how did you live with all that pressure?

NR: If it's OK maybe you can understand that maybe I wasn't completely transparent the whole weekend. Of course I need protect myself a little bit also from your world which is pretty intense, the world media world. So yes it was a very, very tough weekend for me. Many moments not so enjoyable of course, like especially the race, for example. Very, very tough with Verstappen in the beginning there and then in the end of course. Not nice!

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Nico, massive congratulations. I know that Germany right now is celebrating their new champion, but how much glory of that achievement will you give to your Finnish side and your Finnish father?

NR: Heikki Kulta, if I can give you a new statistic: two Rosbergs are World Champions now! That's just a statistic for you – if I got my statistics right, so that's quite a nice new one. What was the question? Sorry.

I have a Finnish passport as well, so I would love to know that everybody in Finland that was supporting me is also very very happy. That would be great and thanks for all your support back in Finland. Of course a part of me is Finnish and always will be and I'm very proud of that.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Nico, Lewis said he was leading the race, he has... NR: Gerhard Berger also, for his support this year. Sitting right there.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Nico, Lewis said he was leading the race, he had the right to conduct the pace of the race...

NR: That's a pretty simple discussion. You can understand the team's perspective and you can understand Lewis's perspective so there's no... that's it.

Q: (Kevin Eason – The Times) Nico, did you sleep last night?

NR: I managed to get a few hours in, yeah. I didn't know what to expect but it worked out OK, yes.

Q: (Kevin Eason – The Times) And where have you been hiding your family, your parents?

NR: My wife is right there and my daughter is back in the hotel.

Q: (Kevin Eason – The Times) And what about your Mum and Dad?

NR: Mum was in the garage just now and Dad, well, he's going to be here as well.

Q: (Kevin Eason – The Times) Where have they been?

NR: I've no idea. They're here now, they were hiding.

Q: (Kevin Eason – The Times) Have they been hiding then? Did you not want them around? How did it work?

NR: I hope my Dad survived that race actually. I haven't seen him yet. I'm sure it was pretty intense for him so I hope he's OK and I can't wait to see him in a while, because I've only seen my Mum for now so I don't know where he is.

Q: (Kevin Eason – The Times) So was he hiding from you?

NR: No, no, they were not here. They just came now, after the race.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Nico, do you think that one of your biggest achievements if not your biggest achievement this year was your mental strength, your focus? You don't seem to have been distracted by pretty much almost anything this season, even when there were incidents earlier in the season you seem to have managed to keep your focus. Would you say that's your biggest achievement alongside your title?

NR: For sure it's a key ingredient, yeah, to why I'm here now. It's continual, yeah, it's just my approach that I've taken from myself. Everybody does his own way; for me that feels best and I've really learned to focus hard. It takes a lot of sacrifice also to stay so focused during a whole year. For sure that helped, yeah.

Q: (Jon McEvoy – Daily Mail) Congratulations on your win today, Nico. Your father's obviously been in the background. He hasn't been seen in the last few days but hasn't been seen either for the last few months. What's been the level of involvement with your father? Are there any words

of wisdom or has he really been at arm's length over the few weeks and months and days as well?

NR: Every Saturday night I get a message from him and most of the time it's like 'pedal to the metal tomorrow, full stop, exclamation mark.' So that's his words of advice every weekend. But my Dad and my Mum both have such a big part in this, my Mum on the private side of course and my Dad for the career steps and all the support all the way. It was massive. I think it's been good how's he's let me get on with it and taken a step back. I think it's been very very good and it's worked well for us and for me, it feels right, so I'm very very thankful for that. It's his way of stepping back a bit for sure.

Q: (Saher Soukar – Saneou Al Hadath) Congratulations Nico, my question is, what will change in your life after winning today?

NR: OK, that's a question. I'm sure it's going to be pretty crazy now for the next few days but I look forward to all that, it's going to be special. Tonight is going to go absolutely nuts, I mean tonight is going to be insane. I think I'm going to be not available for a few days after that and... I don't know.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Sometimes attack is the best form of defence; once you realised what games Lewis was playing, did you ever think about attacking him or vice versa, in the end, using Sebastian Vettel to put pressure on him, by letting Vettel past? NR: Lewis was using all his skill to do it perfectly, so there was absolutely no way for me to manage to get by, so of course I thought about it but it was just pointless so there was no way. He did it in a very good way, in a perfect way.

Q: (Graham Caygill – The National) Congratulations Nico, you had a really strong inter last season, you won here 12 months ago and you won the last few races and the last six pole positions of the season. How important was that strong inter-season after a difficult earlier time in the year, to building to this season? Did it play a part, was it important to have a good winter? NR: For sure that was a big turning point, it was Austin, because Austin was a horrible experience for me and I really spent two days just on my own thinking and I said I didn't ever want to experience that again and then I went and won the next seven races on the trot, so for sure it was a big moment for me and one of the key moments for being here today.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Nico, do you think you can use number one next year or are you going to carry on with the family number six?

NR: I have no idea. I love number six of course, my Dad won the World Championship with number six as well, so it's a very lucky number for us. Don't know, that's it.

Q: (Ysef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Nico, what's the flight home going to be like and what do you have planned for the off-season?

NR: I'm going to Malaysia for Petronas to celebrate there with them, so that's the first flight and then I just want to spend as much time with my family as possible. But it's going to be completely crazy, it's going to go all over the place now but that's a part of it and I look forward to that. I'm making the most of this moment.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Complimenti, Nico, bravissimo. I would like to ask you something about your passion for our country (Italy) because we feel that you are a little bit Italian. Do you think, sometimes, in Italian? Which is the first language that you think in your

mind and which is the most beautiful place that you have (visited) in Italy? Third question is – and then I stop for the rest of the season – if you think that becoming the number one can change you, you can race next year more relaxed to achieve even more than this season?

NR: Well, you will see in videos afterwards that my first celebration dance with my family was actually 'campione del mondo' just now down in the garage because all my friends are Italian. I love the culture and thank you for all the support as well, from Italy, that's amazing to see so many people supporting me in Monza, so very special. Yeah, so big connection from me to Italy. Ah, for sure I'll do a better performance than today or yesterday because it's just difficult with the pressure on like that, it definitely is more difficult.

Q: (Autofocus, Slovenia) Compliments to Nico from Slovenia. But I have another idea: you are a multicultural person, you speak in each press conference in a different language, you speak to every television in a different language. When you are alone in the car, which language do you think in?

NR: English, today it was English.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Lewis, what's the meaning of this victory against Lewis considering...

NR: Easy to confuse us, we look very similar but my name is actually Nico.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) I called you Lewis?

NR: Yup, it's not a problem. It's OK.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) I would say it's a compliment!

NR: It's OK, it's OK. It's been an intense day for everybody.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Well, the question is, you beat Lewis and he's considered one of the best in the history of Formula One and the numbers prove that. What does this mean for you, also considering the history you have with him?

NR: Yeah, for sure, it feels like I've been racing him for ever and always he's just managed to edge me out and get the title even when we were small in go-karts. And he's just an amazing driver and of course one of the best in history so it's unbelievably special to beat him because the level is so high and that makes this even more... for sure, so much more satisfying for me because the benchmark is so... and I took the World Championship away from him which is a phenomenal feeling. It's been a great year as well, for sure he drove at an extremely high level, he's done some incredible racing so he's been a very very tough competitor and I don't know how many points we are apart at the end, you know, five points, which is unbelievable. With the same car.

Q: (Graham Caygill – The National) Given the circumstances and the pressure you were under, do you consider that pass on Max that you did, wheel-to-wheel going through two corners together, one of the best of your career?

NR: Yeah, for sure, yeah, it was great, definitely a great one. Fair play to him, also. He went full-on aggressive of course, he didn't given an inch, as usual but fair play, we didn't collide and I got by, so that felt amazingly good. It was an awesome feeling at the time, really, very relieving and so intense, unbelievably intense really, in the car. I've never felt something like that in the car before.

Q: (Jerome Pugmire – Associated Press) Nico, Alain Prost was saying that you haven't been given the credit you deserve as a driver. Do you agree with that and think that now you will be seen in a different light?

NR: I don't drive for credit, I drive to win the World Championship and I have achieved that and it was my childhood dream to win the World Championship and that's done and that's what I'm excited about and I look forward to celebrating with all the people who have been supporting me.

Q: (Sandor Meszaros – Autosport Es Formula) Nico, congratulations, what did Mr Ecclestone say to you?

NR: He didn't have much time to talk, he was up in the air before he could say something.

NR: Thank you very much, thank for this year, thank you.

Ends