



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

2017 FIA Formula One World Championship
Russian Grand Prix
Post-Race Conference Transcript

DRIVERS

1 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

2 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

3 – Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari)

PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Eddie Jordan)

Valtteri, tell us, what does it feel like, your first ever win in grand prix racing?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Amazing. It took quite a while, more than 80 races for me, but definitely worth the wait, worth the learning curve. This strange opportunity came to me in the winter to join this team and they made it possible today, so I really want to thank to the team, without them it wouldn't be possible, so feels amazing.

It's like a fairy tale isn't it? Four or five months ago you were going to drive with Williams, a particularly good team, but you got the chance to come to this team – a winning, world champion team – and you're one the top [of the] podium at the moment.

VB: yeah, we've had a tricky beginning of the year, you know the fight with Ferrari was again very close. We managed to be on top, but we need to keep pushing, we need to keep finishing with both cars all the time one and two, that's the plan. But just very, very happy now.

Just going to interject here for a second because we see Toto down there and he of little faith gave you a one-year contract. I've got a pen Toto, we need a three-year extension on that minimum with proper money, is that OK? Coming back to you... where's he gone. [Sebastian], Felipe Massa, tell me about him, what happened on that last lap?

Sebastian VETTEL: I obviously tried everything to catch Valtteri and maybe I thought there might be some opportunity on the back straight. I was sure [Felipe] would lift around Turn 3, it's flat out, and let me be, so I wouldn't lose much time, but then I think I just wasn't sure what he was going to do and I ended up losing a bit more than I was hoping

for. But it doesn't matter. This is the man of the race today, big congrats to Valtteri, it's his first grand prix win, so it's his day.

Very well said. I have to ask you, your strategy: you ran much deeper into the race on those tyres and it looked like it was paying off.

SV: Not really, we didn't come out ahead. Yeah, we had fresher tyres in the end. Obviously there was a gap to Kimi behind and we just decided to try and extend as much as possible to hope for maybe Valtteri running into trouble with traffic, us having a clear track. That was the plan. So I think we tried everything, but obviously we lost the race at the start, which was a bit of a shame. I had a good start but...

I was going to ask about that. You were a bit unlucky, both of you, on the front row of the grid but you have the longest run to the first corner but you got out-dragged?

SV: Yeah, that's basically it. I think our start was basically a match with Valtteri, maybe he gained a bit of momentum in the beginning but then obviously he had a massive tow. I defended the inside but by the time we approached braking he was already in front and able to shut the door on me, so well done, and that's where he won the race. And then he did a superb first stint, I couldn't stay with him, he was very, very quick all; race, no mistakes and as I said – man of the race.

Ladies and gentlemen, year on year Kimi has been voted the most popular driver in Formula One and you have your fans here.

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Yeah, I'm very happy that I have here support but whatever country they come from I'm very happy to have the. Unfortunately today we could only give third place but we try next time more so.

We have to talk about the podium and the lock-out on the front row. We weren't sure how it would wind up and today both of you are on the podium. It shows a great sign for the future of this season and the championship and the excitement of it?

KR: Yeah, I think I have had a little bit of a rough start to the season. Far from ideal but this weekend for sure has been a step forward. We have been more happy with how things have been running but we still only finished third. We lost out at the start and then not a lot happened after that. We keep trying and keep improving and I'm sure we'll get there, but it's all about... all the small details have to be exactly there and then you will get the first place. The four or five of us are very close most of the time, so it's the small differences that make a big difference in the end.

Valtteri, special day for you as we have already said. You also got driver of the day; that's another little celebration you didn't know about. Got to talk to you about that start: [Sebastian] said you more or less but you couldn't have, you absolutely out-dragged both of them.

VB: Yeah, I mean, I think here normally starting from the second row is not too bad. I had a good start, if anything maybe slightly better than the guys in front. Obviously slipstreaming managed to get the inside for Turn 1. That was OK, but I'm a little bit more happy about the safety car restart actually.

He has big shoulders, he has a lot to live up to because he's got Kimi, Keke Rosberg and of course Mika [Häkkinen], all world champion Finns. Are you going to be the next world champion Finn?

VB: For me that's the only goal in my career, so we will keep pushing for that.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Valtteri, has the reality of what you've just achieved sunk in?

VB: No. It's going to take a while. I have to say, normally I'm not that emotional but hearing the Finnish national anthem is something quite special for me – felt good. But it is a little bit surreal: first win, and hopefully first of many. It was definitely one of my best races, personally, ever. It's a good feeling and just, yeah, happy.

Q: How was the pressure towards the end of the race when you had Sebastian gaining on you and you were hitting traffic?

VB: It was OK. Just the main thing was with the lapped cars and trying to get past those and with these new cars we definitely lose more downforce, already two seconds, three seconds behind, so it was tricky to get close and pass them without losing time. That was the main thing at the end and I wasn't quite happy for a few occasions. I also had one lock-up, maybe 10 or 15 laps to go, which hurt a little bit the pace. Other than that it was OK. I did ask for a bit more radio silence from the guys on the pit wall, just for me to get on it and focus for it and feel a bit more like home. Quite nice and quiet and that helped.

Q: How much confidence do you think this victory will give you going forward?

VB: I think a lot. I've always know I could do good results if everything goes right. I always trust in my ability but it's nice to get confirmation that the results are possible, that anything is possible, so definitely good to continue from here.

Q: Sebastian, in reality it all came down to the start, didn't it? How was your getaway from pole position?

SV: I thought it was OK. [To VB] Was it bad, my getaway?

VB: I had a little bit better one...

SV: Well, later on, yes. No, I thought there was a bit in the very beginning where I could have been a bit more aggressive but it was a bit hard to tell because for the formation lap, for some reason... I have the time of day in the car and it was two o'clock and the lights didn't go off. So I was ready to go. I don't know why there was a delay. Maybe whoever's responsible to turn the lights off, didn't turn the lights off! What I mean by that is that I didn't get a proper read of how the grip was at the grid, so I think I ended up maybe a bit too conservative. Still, I had a good start. I had a look in the mirror, mine was I think better than Kimi's. I saw Valtteri coming and I thought 'OK, it will be close' but it felt like I had a tent dragged behind me and he was gaining a lot. He was able even before we hit the braking to come back and shut the door. So I did well but nothing I could have done, I had the outside line but nowhere to do so in reality that's part of where we lost the race. And then the first stint: we were just not quick enough to stay with him. In the end of the day we can talk about my race but today is Valtteri's day. He drove a fantastic race, he had incredible pace. Also, if you look all weekend where he's been compared to his teammate, so, y'know, he's done a superb job, it's his day and he deserves to win today because he drove better than all the rest of us. So... it's not easy to swallow. I would have loved, obviously, to come back but that's the way it was today. Well done.

VB: Thanks.

Q: Kimi, coming to you, similar problems to Sebastian at the start? Just talk us through your getaway.

KR: I had a pretty poor start, comparing even to Seb. Got wheelspin straight away and then I really thought I was going to lose a lot more but then luckily, both of these cars

went side-by-side and I started to get the tow and I managed to stay ahead of Lewis in the end. But, I don't know what happened. It was slippery and lost a lot, so, not ideal. If you look last year it's all about starts, and if you lose a place in those, it's going to be a boring race. Not a lot happened after that. Mercedes, Valtteri was a bit too fast but then we were kind of holding our positions but nothing really happened the whole race, so, yeah, all about the start. Happy for Valtteri. People always think that we have something against each other because we have come close to each other and into each other a few times but no, I'm very happy for him to win. It doesn't mean that I'm not happy if Seb wins. It's good for him and things will turn out to be for sure good for him. It's going to be close between both of the Ferrari and both of the Mercedes drivers this year, so it will be exciting – but unfortunately a lot of times it will depend of what happens in a first lap. That's how it's going to play out. Hopefully it goes better. I'm more happy this weekend but obviously not happy to be third but this is how it goes sometimes.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) To both Ferrari drivers: do you think if you had jumped in front of Valtteri and Lewis do you think you could have kept the leadership of the race considering the pace of Bottas with the ultrasoft – if you were surprised with that. And also, for you Kimi, were you surprised that Bottas was in front of you?

KR: At what point?

During the race you said on the radio that you were surprised that Bottas was in front of you.

KR: Yes, because I was not sure which one it was in the front of the race. I was asking – I was not sure because it was a bit confusing for me after the pitstops. Obviously I realised straight after. For me it made no difference: there was one Mercedes in front of us. I didn't ask before.

And Sebastian, had you got the jump on Valtteri and made it to Turn One first, are you confident you could have stayed ahead?

SV: Well, it's difficult to pass, let's put it that way. I think it would have been difficult for Valtteri to put a lot of pressure on, even though I would say he had superior pace in the first stint. I think if you look at the stint I was struggling in the beginning, then sort of froze the gap and then was able to close. Now, if Valtteri's closer to us, let's say if we were in the lead, then obviously I don't know the gaps behind, whether they have changed their strategy or not – but didn't turn out to be that way but for sure, if we had track position then I think we had the pace also to keep it. At the end I think we were quicker on the supersoft but we were behind so, yeah. Also I was on fresher tyres so it's not entirely fair. Overall he was a bit quicker in the first stint. For the race overall it was a good match, so yeah, the first lap mattered. As I said, he executed the start well, which obviously this year is crucial. It was in our hands so he did a good job and then he drove a very good first stint which didn't give us the opportunity to put him under pressure and do something around the stop because we were simply too far away.

Q: (Kiril Zaytsev – 66.ru) Question for Valtteri Bottas. Valtteri, I have a theory about your win, please tell me am I right or not. I think that you won because you were very angry about all of these questions what it's like to be number two in the team and so on. You were so angry you won and now you are number one, yes?

VB: I don't think that was the reason for the success this weekend! Good theory but I don't think it's right. It really doesn't matter in the car if you're angry or not. Anyway you are doing your best. When I drive there is not much emotion in there. I'm just trying to get

everything right and get every lap, every corner perfectly. All the questions, all the speculation, number two driver and so on, it doesn't get into me. It doesn't matter.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) To Sebastian. Now you turn to the European leg of the Championship with 13 points of advantage on Lewis. How much is it in accordance with your dreams and how much is it a surprise?

SV: I don't know if I have an answer for you. We had a good run up in Barcelona at the tests, so looking forwards to Barcelona, the car felt good. I think we've improved it from early March to now – but yeah, I don't need to think about the Championship because you're kind enough to remind us where we are. I think we've had a very good start. It would be wrong to sit here and say that's what we expected – but we're here to win, we're here to do our best. If we look back I think we have more or less extracted the maximum. So very happy with where we are as a team – but we can still learn and we can still improve and I think that's the way we go forward. Nothing is for granted, Barcelona is just another race and we have a lot of races to go this year. But before that we have two weeks' time to look at what we have done so far and improve. Today I think the speed in general was there, the balance dropped away from me a little bit in the first stint. I struggled with the fronts and couldn't attack as much as I was hoping for and as much as I was probably able to in qualifying. So things that we could have done better but the race is done today so yeah, I'm generally looking forwards: we have a strong car, a strong team, the spirit is good, so lots of positives.

Q: (Tony Dodgins – Channel 4) Valtteri, I think in Australia and last summer you struggled in the first stint on the softer compound. Today, Sebastian said he couldn't stay with you. Have you made progress on that generally or is it surface specific here and did that surprise you?

VC: Well, I think it was very different to Bahrain, for example, with the temperatures and the surface of the tarmac and the track layout, so I can't say we've fixed some of the issues we had in the last race but I think we did a better job here in general, to get most out of ever being in these conditions on this track. I think from Friday until Saturday, Sunday we made good progress, we managed to optimise everything and that made the win possible today. We were a little bit afraid of struggling at the beginning of the stints but that didn't really seem to be the case and also the tyre life was good compared to Ferrari so the guys did a very good job this weekend.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Two questions for Valtteri: you talked about the start but the restart was even better because you were more than one second ahead of Sebastian as you crossed the line, so talk us through that and just before your pit stop you were losing a lot of time behind backmarkers. Were you frustrated there or did you know that you needed those extra laps because the pace on the harder tyre was not so good?

VB: The restart was very good and kind of a surprise actually by the gap but that was good. Obviously it worked. You have few opportunities where you start going. I think the main thing is not to catch the safety car before the safety car line but that obviously worked, so that was good. Yeah, the back markers, getting through the traffic, that was the main worry for me and especially at the end of the race, that was losing more time with these cars, following... already when you're within two, three seconds and you start to lose some lap time, especially in the mid-sector in those medium speed corners so that was quite tricky and I wasn't quite happy at times but I always knew that Seb and Kimi behind would have the same problem as I had with the guys so in the end it was OK.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Valtteri and Sebastian, is there any technical explanation about what happened before turn two and the

overtaking? Was it just a question of the slipstream or was there some technical explanation?

SV: I didn't see much. You had a better view, I guess.

VB: Yes, so from my side I felt like I had a good start, maybe initially slightly better than Seb but very close I think, and obviously here the slipstreaming is the main thing. It's nearly one kilometre into turn one. If you can get a tow, you can carry the speed and I managed to do it, even though I was on the outside I managed to get in front of Seb and close the door and that was it really.

SV: The straight was a bit too long so maybe we can move the grid further up. For me there was not much I could do. I think it was a drag race. Obviously I didn't have a tow. There was a bit of headwind as well, the wind was blowing the wrong way so it's another 10/15kph off, the speed that you lose with the wind blowing against you rather than from behind. I guess it helped him but it didn't help me today.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) For sure you don't have a crystal ball but next race most of the teams will present very different cars and these changes have been conceived using all the knowledge gained in the first four races of the season with these new regulations. What do project for the next phase of the season with all these cars? Do you believe it's possible there can be some dramatic changes to what we have been seeing until now?

VB: I think it's just going to get quicker, every car is going to get a lot better through the season and always when there's a big rule change and the progress is bigger, the steps are bigger, the performance... more lap time gained during the year. I think it's going to be the same for each team and I think the top teams with more resources can obviously improve more. Hopefully we can improve more but I don't think there will be anything dramatic; just the cars are going to be quicker, more downforce really and better tyre understanding with the tracks and all of the compounds.

SV: Well, I was just thinking whether I should buy a crystal ball. So many times we get questions up here, looking into the future. You said we don't have one, which is right, which is why I was thinking maybe I should get one. I think it will be same as everything else. It will be a surprise, I think it will be a very close race between Mercedes and us, I hope, and I also hope that Red Bull find some pace. There's a lot of rumours around. They are a strong team, they know how to build a quick car so I expect it's a question of when rather than if but the sooner, the more exciting it will be but for us. I'm confident that we have the right people, the right tools on board and we will make progress. It obviously depends on what others are doing.

KR: We'll see what happens in two weeks at the next race. There's always a lot of talk because it's the first real European round. Let's wait and see.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Valtteri, you spoke on the podium about Nico Rosberg, the chance his retirement gave you for the possible victory. Have you planned to go and see Nico when you are back in Monaco or will you call him tonight?

VB: I didn't actually speak about Nico. Obviously I respect him as a driver and World Champion and everything but I just said there was this strange opportunity for me that happened in the winter that made this possible. You never know in life what's going to happen and it was a great opportunity. I wasn't planning on calling him really. I think I'm going to call my wife first and then see who I'm going to call afterwards.

Ends

