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Press Information

2016 Italian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Esteban GUTIERREZ (Haas), Carlos SAINZ (Toro Rosso), Kevin MAGNUSSEN (Renault), Jenson BUTTON (McLaren), Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari), Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Kevin, obviously a horrible accident in Spa. How are you and what did you have to do to get ready for this race?

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: I have just relaxed. Nothing was broken, I wasn't injured so just a bit sore in my body and I didn't need to do anything special. No special treatments or anything. Yeah, just took a couple of days at home and ready for the next race.

And what happened?

KM: I spin at the top of Eau Rouge. I hit a bump and lost the rear. I thought I was going to go left into a spin, but then the car caught grip again and I went right and into the wall. Yeah, that's what happened.

Thanks for that. Kimi, coming to you: some strong feelings after the Spa weekend, especially with regard to Max Verstappen. What would you like to happen now with regard to the rules of engagement between drivers out on the track when it comes to attacking and defending?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: I think it's quite clear what they are and obviously sometimes you feel it's not correct what happens on circuit but obviously I think the biggest problem is it's not always the same. I think as drivers we always discussed it and it's a bit up and down and I think that could be improved. Personally I have nothing against Max. He is doing a good job and he's fast. It's not a personal thing but certain things, at least in my feeling, were not correct if you have to slow down or brake under full speed but those things are never ending discussions but let's see what happens.

You've also now had a chance to study video of the collision at the start with Sebastian. Have you discussed it together during the week and what conclusions did you come to?

KR: Obviously it was an unfortunate thing. Not really an awful lot to discuss except probably he said sorry and I said OK and you know we go forward. It wasn't ideal for us or any of the three to be involved, but that's how it goes sometimes. So next time we try to give a bit more room but it's done now.

Thank you for that. And your side of that, Seb? Kimi's said you apologised to him. You've had a good chance to review it, to think it through again, what are your feelings now in the cold light of day?

Sebastian VETTEL: Not so much to talk about,. It's clear what happened. Obviously I thought there was Kimi on the inside but as it turned out there was three cars. The room that I gave was for Kimi, it was not for three cars because I think Max had a bad start and was out of that fight, but decided not to, so in the end we had three cars with not enough room. From my side, it's clear. Obviously if I know that – I can't see much in the mirrors, I could see that Kimi was there and I was slightly ahead – if I had to do it again, knowing that, I would give a little bit more room, at least I make I don't know about the cars on the inside then, but I think it was a pity for all three to be involved and not to come out of the corner being able to race for the podium after that.

OK, moving forward, Italian Grand Prix this weekend, special atmosphere here as always. You had a great experience here 12 months ago, on the podium, all that warmth from the tifosi. Is it fair to say, though, that this race comes at a slightly difficult moment for the team – you haven't had a podium for a few races and Red Bull have moved ahead of you in the championship?

SV: No, I think it comes at the right time, I think we need a bit of a boost and support, so very much looking forward to this weekend. Last weekend was very positive for us. Obviously the race didn't unfold the way we expected or we hoped for but it was very positive in terms of pace. I think we had a couple of races before the summer break where we were struggling a bit and we seemed to reconnect to the group ahead again, so I'm pretty confident the car should be fine here. Obviously it's a different track and unique in many ways, but like I said, I think it comes at the right time, with people supporting us. Already now the couple of hours this day has had it was very positive with a lot of fans and it's one of the biggest pleasures for us to race in front of the home crowd.

OK, thank you very much for that. Coming to you Esteban, you've finished just outside the points four times this season, do you feel that breakthrough points-scoring finish for Haas is just around the corner?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Yes, it is and it's very important to have found the consistency and the rhythm we have in the last three months, because by being consistent and being persistent we will go an break through the top 10, which for us is obviously the target in every race from now to the end of the season. It hasn't been an easy task, especially with how my season started, but we have been making very good progress inside the team in many ways and we can look into the positive sides and keep pushing and keep doing our best to get there.

Haas obviously has a technical partnership with the home team here this weekend, Ferrari, a special weekend I'm sure, but how do you see the collaboration evolving?

EG: I think it's an important part for the team of course. It is something that gives a lot of confidence right from the beginning to have the support and obviously the relationship is important for the whole team. So I think that's going to keep going and it's going to keep going forward in the way that it has to be done, properly considering the regulations that have to be well respected but the relationship is there and it's going to continue forward in the next years.

Thank you very much for that. Carlos, coming to you, 22 years old today, happy birthday. A little bit of a frustrating race for you last weekend going out with a puncture and presumably it's not a great moment as well for the championship for you, as it seems that the lack of updates now on the power unit is beginning to cost in terms of performance. What are your feelings about the rest of the races this season?

Carlos SAINZ: Yeah, we are not going through our best moments at the moments. Yeah, since Hockenheim and the last race in Spa it looks like it's taking us a lot more effort to get close to the top ten. Spa was kind of expected; Hockenheim not so much, but we are definitely not where we want to be. In theory we think were prepared for the performance drop-off of the engine in the second half of the season but it has been maybe a bit more than expected, so now there is a lot

work going on in Toro Rosso, a lot of analysis, a lot of testing coming up in free practice to try to turn around this bit of a bump we are going through. I still have full confidence. Spa – it would have been nice to see what we could have achieved after being P7 at the start, but it's how it is sometimes.

Just looking at your record this year: when you've finished you've scored points in all but two of those races. So, from a personal point of view, comparing last season with this one, do you feel pleased with the progress you're making?

CS: I think I have to be very pleased, because last year I went through very difficult moments with the reliability and I kept telling the people 'wait, because the moment I stop having these issues I will be able to show what I am more capable of in Formula One'. And that first half of the season was also to prove myself and to prove also that when I don't have so many problems I can score some points. This consistency has allowed me to create a lot of points in the first half of the season... that will be probably be very difficult to keep for the second half!

Thank you. Coming to you Jenson, obviously the power unit upgrades in Spa seemed to work pretty well, and rival team engineers tell me your corner speeds were very impressive in Spa as well, so it seems that it's all starting to come together for McLaren?

Jenson BUTTON: Well, yeah, I only did four corners, but I think they all look fantastic, so very happy with them! No, seriously, as a whole we probably did better in Spa than most people expected. I think we were probably running a little bit more downforce than other people as well. But if you look at Fernando, if you forget the first few laps, if you look at the actual pace of the car, Fernando was actually good in the race. It's promising coming here, you know these are two reasonably difficult circuits for us, but we've definitely made good progress. Honda have done a great job of bringing the upgrade to Spa and it's good to see progress pretty much every race we have with Honda and also with the car, so yeah, I think it's progressing well.

What about yourself? When do you expect to announce your plans, what you're going to do next?

JB: That's progressing well as well. So, progress is the name of the game? So it's good.

Before we move on to the floor, just a few moments ago Felipe Massa announced that he is retiring from Formula One. Just some thoughts from each of you maybe about him, his contribution as a driver and as a colleague. Kimi, you were a team-mate of his, so maybe you could start?

KR: Obviously it's a big shame, but this is his choice in the end. We had a good relationship when we were in the same team and obviously he has had some difficult moments in F1, with the accident, but he's been strong always and he's a very nice guy. So, life goes on, and I'm sure he made the right choice for himself, so hopefully he has a good end to his F1 career.

Kevin?

KM: He's had a long career. I don't think I've seen Formula One when he wasn't racing, so he's had a long career. He's had a good one. As Kimi said, if he feels it's the right time then good luck to him and not much more.

Sebastian?

SV: He's a really nice guy, really funny. It's a shame to see that he quits because he will be missed. Obviously I wish him all the best for whatever he decides to do in the future. I think apart from the talent and speed he has on the track, as I said, he's a great guy and very easy-going and he will be missed.

Esteban?

EG: Well I think it was quite a wise decision to make – which is probably not an easy one to make for everyone's career. I have great memories for when he accepted my call and invited me for dinner back in 2008, when I was racing Formula BMW. At that time, that meant a lot for me. Now, I wish him the best. He has made an incredible career and he has to be proud of that.

Jenson?

JB: I've raced with Felipe since he started in Formula One, I think it's about 15 years we've been racing together, so yeah, it's always a strange feeling when someone retires from the sport that's achieved so much, so many victories, and being so close as well to a world championship. But we all have our own reasons. I think it's a brave decision but he's chosen to retire so it's definitely the right one.

And finally, Carlos.

CS: From my personal side I remember meeting him for the first time in 2005. I think I was 10-11 years old. He was really kind to me and was my hero Formula One driver. He was very funny, very kind to me and since then I've had lots of respect for him. Five minutes before coming here I went to give him a hug, wish him all the best and I'm sure he'll have a good life from now on.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Peter Farkas – Auto Motor) This is for anyone who cares to comment on Max Verstappen's driving but especially to the Ferrari guys. Sebastian, you said last weekend you were not a fan of punishing drivers because of how they drive. Have you maybe talked to Max about it and what do you think is the way to go to make him understand that he's sometimes overstepping the limit. And Kimi, could you please clarify, when you overtook Max on lap 12, I think, when you both went off because he outbraked you after you left him on the straight. Who was it who asked you to let him pass again.

KR: Obviously I asked from the team if I have to give the position back or not and they asked the FIA or Charlie and the answer was that I have. I haven't seen where he went or if he stayed on the circuit or not and... kind of stayed on the circuit, much more than me, so obviously that was a pretty easy decision from my side.

Sebastian?

SV: Not sure I remember all of it but haven't spoken to him yet. I think the thing that we've spoken about before and has come up again in Spa was the bit that is the moving under braking which obviously, as the lead car, is the wrong thing to do. The following car can react but there are situations where you can't react any more and it will end up in a crash which has been something that we've talked about. I think he understood when we spoke about it so we obviously need to maybe have another chat. But as I said in Spa, I'm not a big fan of running to the stewards and complain there. I think it's much better if we do it face to face. Unfortunately we haven't done that yet but I'm sure we will.

Q: (Nadia Enevoldsen – bmf1.dk) I have a question for Vettel. In 2008 you won your first grand prix here where you were the youngest driver ever – can you win on Sunday and if so will the feeling be even better than this feeling from 2008?

SV: I think we should have a good weekend. I think Spa was a good step to come back and obviously this race means a lot to us, means a lot to me. Not only... I mean of course because being one of the Ferrari drivers driving on home soil is... with all the tifosi coming and supporting is great – but it also means a lot to me because it's the place, as you mentioned, where I won my first race. I think the first race win is always something that will stand out and something that you

don't forget. Obviously I've been very lucky in the last couple of years to have some more wins but for sure, after last year's experience here, being on the podium in the red suit, I probably realized that, yeah, people don't hate me as much as I thought after the last couple of years with Red Bull! Very much looking forward to the race on Sunday and that's definitely something that would be a dream coming true to win here dressed in red. We're working very hard for that.

Q: (Ralph Woodall - L'Equipe) Question for Kevin. After such a big crash how do you feel about going back in the car? Are you apprehensive? What are your expectations for the weekend?

KM: After a crash like that it's clear that the car is very safe and there's not too much to worry about. I'm going to be flat-out again and pushing as hard as I can. I think in terms of expectations for this race, we had a stronger weekend in Spa and were a little bit surprised by our pace in qualifying especially. On this track the setup is not too different, the setup is very similar, so hopefully it will show that we are still on that level.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, you have never won in Italy and have had three podiums here. How would you describe your relationship with the Monza circuit?

KR: I enjoy the circuit, usually it's always a great weekend, even before I raced for Ferrari. I had some good memories and some not-so-good memories from here. It's never been straightforward weekends of races for me. But it's a great place to come and, for racing, it's quite a special place. The circuit layout and obviously the history what is in the place, plus being part of Ferrari, we have amazing support and obviously our home race so hopefully this weekend goes well. We feel we have a good chance so hopefully we make all the right things and... choose right things when it comes and get the best out of it. But I enjoy to come here and race.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Question for Seb, couple of things. Why do you think this season hasn't gone how you guys would have hoped. What reasons do you have in your mind for that, that you haven't met the targets you set yourselves. Second to that, you moved to Ferrari to win the championship. How much patience do you have with the team to get it right? Are you going to be here until you win?

SV: Maybe I start with the second one. I don't feel old so I think I've got some time. I'm not a patient person, I'm pretty much the opposite, which I think goes hand-in-hand with your first question. It's very simple: we were not quick enough up to that point. We didn't therefore collect as much points as we wanted to. Obviously if you're a lot quicker then you're in a much better position to win races, you score more points and you get nicer questions. That's usually how it goes. I've been on the other side as well. But yeah, I'm pretty confident we'll have better days again and we have our home race ahead of us. Sounded pretty negative but I think actually it's a lot of positives to look forward to. I think it will be amazing in terms of support. It's great to come here, the place means a lot to us, to myself and I think we have a good chance to fight for a good and strong podium – maybe even more. We will see. I think it's clear that all of us inside the team, we are not very patient, we have very high expectations which I think we've expressed many times at the beginning of the year. We want to fight for the championship but, as I said, as a net result so far we haven't been competitive and quick enough – yet. We are trying our utmost to improve it. There's a lot of things happening on the track, even more things happening back in Maranello at the factory to work on that and change that. People are fired up – even if it still takes a little bit.

Q: (Fulvio Solms – Corriere dello Sport) Question is for Seb and Kimi. You have a very good relationship, that's clear and that's OK but wouldn't you like to live every race with a really stressing weekend, fighting each other with a winning car like Lewis and Nico at Mercedes?

SV: I don't understand the question... the first part you say we get along and the second part you ask if we... wouldn't like to get along basically! Oh, of course, if both of us could choose we'd love to drive the car that is more competitive and is a bit easier to win races – but I don't think it would

change anything in the relationship. Obviously we're driving the same car, as you saw on Sunday we're fighting for the same bit of tarmac, sometimes things go wrong which, obviously, is bad when it happens, but it happens. So in that moment, or after, nothing you can do but overall, I think that's what we're working for. Us and the whole team. To have that winning car and fight for the championship.

Kimi?

KR: We race as hard as we can against each other, we try to beat each other every time and what would it change? We all want the team to be fighting for wins and fighting for the championship with both cars. I don't see what... nothing would change. We still try to beat each other but we can still be friends. Would be just better for all of us.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) To all drivers. It looks like each group of [stewards] have their own interpretation of the rules. For example, what we saw in Spa, in other circumstances, probably Max would be punished, as Alonso also, when he left the pits, concerning with Perez. Do you believe that with the same group of [stewards] it would be clear, the rules would be more clear, you know exactly what you can and can't do?

CS: I full agree on that point. Since I have been in Formula One the consistency on the penalties has been not good enough. Sometimes you run people wide on the track and you get a 10-second penalty, like I did in Russia, or a five-second penalty, I don't remember. Then you do it again in Spain, like I did but you don't get anything. Some other drivers get the same or not. I would say it's just not consistent enough and I think we all agree on that.

JB: yeah, I agree. I think we all understand that the consistency is the most important thing, but it's also very difficult to get that because you are not going to get the same stewards at every race, so it's a tricky one.

EG: Yes, I agree with the two guys here. Consistency has not been great. It's something that has been the case in the last few years, some strange things happen from time to time but yeah, probably having more consistency would be a bit more fair for everybody.

Kimi, you spoke about this earlier on in your earlier answers, anything more to add?

KR: No, not really. I think it's been discussed many times in our drivers' meetings but obviously it's still not anybody's fault.

Kevin?

KM: I agree with the rest of the guys. It would be better to have the same guys but I don't know if it's possible.

Sebastian, is it possible to solve it?

SV: I think it's tricky one. We had a permanent steward and we shied away from it because we felt it wasn't good. It's actually something I wouldn't like to do – I wouldn't like to be a steward. We ended up developing too many regulations and therefore taking every scenario as a different one we ended up with every scenario being treated differently. I think it's actually impossible to consistent, 100 per cent consistent, in that regard. I think the problem is that, as I said, we try to regulate too much. I think it would be much better if it was more in our hands and you leave us to deal with. Obviously there are limits, you can't just take somebody off the track and there have been some issues that deserve to be talked about recently or in the past, whatever. I think it would be much better if you leave us to deal with it and I think it would also enhance the amount of respect amongst drivers, just to talk about it, and if you're angry sometimes just out of the car and hit the other guy! Well, we're not allowed to do that anymore. In many regards we have too

many things and too many people with opinions that... I don't know, do you say you have 'too many cooks in the kitchen'? Amongst those lines so...

Q: (Ralf Bach – Auto Bild Motorsport) Sebastian, you said something before about nice questions. So what is a nice question for you in the current situation with Ferrari?

SV: No, I think what I said was that obviously if you keep winning races and doing a good job people don't ask you what's wrong because clearly everything is fine. If you're not winning, then obviously everybody is curious why you're not winning. I think there's always a reason and obviously, as I said, the more competitive you are the less then you have to deal with that sort of question, which is not a problem but it's just a little boring if every weekend it's the same question. You give the answer, you thought you've answered their question and then it comes up again and again and again. I think we've all been there so it's part of the deal.

Q: (Barna Zsoldos – Nemzeti Sport) To the Ferrari drivers: you were quite unhappy with Max's driving in Spa but he said that you should be ashamed for causing a collision and destroying his race. Sebastian, you are 29, Kimi you're almost 37. Looking at the fact that he's just a teenager, does this make his comments and actions even more annoying for you?

SV: Well, I think it's nothing. I don't think we have anything to be ashamed about, first of all, and secondly, I think as I tried in the answer before, it's a question of respect. I think we're all here to race, we love what we do, we share one great passion which dictates a very very big part of our lives. It's something we all have in common. We might get along, we might not get along but that's not really that important, but I think we should always have respect for each other.

KR: Everybody is allowed to say what they feel like. Like I said before, I've nothing personally against him. It's just certain things in my view that are not correct. I've no interest to call Max into it but obviously if somebody says during the race that he does something because of what happened in the first corner, that it's payback, I don't think it's the correct sport to start doing purposely paying back something that has happened. It can end up in a very bad way. Yes, people make mistakes, everybody has made it and it will happen to probably all of us and you just have to accept it but it's not the place to start acting silly in a way and paying back for something that has happened.

Q: (Ralph Woodall – L'Equipe) Jenson, would you be interested in going to Williams or is your priority elsewhere, staying with McLaren? Now you know there's a seat.

JB: I would love to make this really exciting because yeah, but I've got nothing else to say on what I'm doing next year or my future. Sorry to say.

Q: (Jens Nagler – Sport Bild?) Sebastian and Kimi, the two of you obviously made contact at the start in Belgium and you did in China earlier in the year as well, even if in both cases another driver was involved. I can imagine you will be quite keen to avoid a repeat of making contact with each other here in Monza. I don't imagine as racing drivers you will admit to going a little more cautiously but will you be doing any extra homework, looking maybe at tapes of earlier races to avoid making contact with each other?

SV: You answered the question yourself there. I don't think we have to explain anything.

KR: Nothing to add, not really.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrisas) Carlos Sainz, I want to know what changed in the team after the change-over between Daniel and Max?

CS: Not much. My teammate has changed but my approach and my attitude to work, to Formula One, is exactly the same. The team, internally, had a bit of a reshuffle but it was all in a good direction. I think we can be happier with the first half of the season of Toro Rosso. We will see how the second half goes but it's going to be tough for us. We need to make sure we put everything in

our hands to keep McLaren in our sights. I think it's going to be very difficult because they're already ahead but it's going to be tough but we're going to try our best.

Q: (Peter Varkas – Auto Motor) Jenson, last year you often said that you felt like a sitting duck while trying to defend, because of the engine deficit. From the cockpit, how much easier has it become to defend against other people this year and is it fair to say that Monza will be one of the toughest tests of the Honda progress?

JB: Yeah, especially here and Spa, it limits your strategy massively or it has done in the past, it really does because you can't hold people up on the straights but it's very different now, very different situation I think in terms of the power unit itself. We've moved on a lot but also with the deployment; I think we've probably got the best deployment out there. I'm much happier coming here, especially after... the whole weekend of Spa was positive, the feeling of the car, the feeling of the power unit. We still know there's a long way to go with it before we're properly competitive but it's great to see progress at almost every Grand Prix we go to, whether it's a qualifying map becoming a race map or something completely new. The guys back at Woking as well, at the MTC, bringing new parts to almost every race and I think that's probably more than most teams out there so we're still pushing and obviously a lot of the stuff that we do that we are putting on the car is stuff that will help next year's car as well, so yeah, it's good to feel that progress and it's so much more enjoyable to drive when you're inside the top ten and fighting even further forward. It's a really nice feeling, considering where we were last year which was very difficult, so big big progress but you always want more. When you finish sixth or seventh, it's a good job for where we are right now but you're still sixth or seventh, it's not winning the race. When you're used to winning – quite a while ago now – but you still want to get back there and it's obviously the aim for the team.

Ends