



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

**2016 Malaysian Grand Prix
Thursday Press Conference Transcript**

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DRIVERS – Jenson BUTTON (McLaren), Felipe MASSA (Williams), Esteban OCON (Manor), Daniil KVYAT (Toro Rosso), Nico HULKENBERG (Force India), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Jenson let's start with you. Your 300th grand prix, only the third driver to do it, it's a big number. What does your place in Formula One history mean to you?

Jenson BUTTON: That's a good question that deserves a very long answer and I'm not going to give it to you here. It means I have been around for a hell of a long time. I remember when Rubens got to 300 – it was unbelievable that he'd reached 300 grands prix. I was like, "I'm never going to race for that long". I remember when I started in 2000 – I'm not going to give you my life story – but when I started in 2000 I remember speaking to my dad and he said: "How long do you think you're going to race for?" and I said: "No! I'll be done by the time I'm 30 years old." And here I am at 36 and this weekend I'm starting my 300th grand prix. It definitely sucks you in, Formula One. It doesn't let go for a long time, as long as you are performing. So it's been a great ride to 300. Lots of ups and downs, as every career will have, and the important thing is that you stay on top of those bad times and you enjoy the good times as much as you can, because you never know how long they are going to last. A very exciting career to this point, 300 races, and if any of these guys can achieve it around me, fair play to them, because it's a long time doing the same thing.

Now, Honda have said, going into this weekend, they're going to review whether to use updated power units, presumably with tokens used, during the weekend at some point. What will be the decisive factors and what would you personally like to do from a strategic point of view looking at this race and at their home grand prix in Suzuka?

JB: Obviously they don't want to take any penalties in Suzuka, which is completely understandable. It's basically our second home race. Here – I can't speak for the other car – but I personally won't be having a penalty. It will be a normal weekend for me.

OK, that's very clear, thank you very much for that. Nico Hulkenberg, coming to you, Force India are now fourth in the Constructors' and have outscored Williams 39 to 19 in the last five races. Is there a belief in the team that you can beat them at the end of the season?

Nico HULKENBERG: Yeah, absolutely, of course. We're doing well, especially since Barcelona the second half has been quite successful. The scores and the points back that up. But obviously there is still a long way to go. For us we definitely aim for and target that's fourth place, but Sunday night in Abu Dhabi, that's when we count everything and that's when we have to be ahead. Now it's a tight margin, they're not going to give it to us for free. We have to work for it and yeah, make it work.

Let's throw that same question to Felipe. Is that scoring ratio causing concerns internally at Williams and how are you addressing it?

Felipe MASSA: It's definitely a big fight. So they are doing a very good championship. I think they improved the car a lot during the season. I believe we can fight them to the end and I believe maybe we can finish in front of them. But you don't know. You will count race to race the amount of points we are doing compared to them, so I would say some of the tracks you have now are a bit better than some of the tracks we did, like maybe Singapore, the road tracks where they really have a very quick and competitive car. The circuits now are a little bit better for us, but the fight will be race by race and I hope we can do it.

And back to Nico Hulkenberg: you're both using the same engine, so what's giving your side the added value?

NH: The car hopefully. It is close and I think it will be a battle all the way to the end. I think good clean weekends, consistent from here is very important, maximise the opportunities we get, and yeah, that will determine at the end who will be fourth.

We'll move on to Dany Kvyat and come back to Felipe in a moment. You said after the Singapore Grand Prix performance that you had rediscovered your love for Formula One after a tough few months. Why? What was so special about that race for you?

Daniil KVIAT: Well, it was an enjoyable race first of all, first time in a while, because we managed to have a good start. We were fighting all the race for quite high positions and it was a bit of a relief for the whole team to find ourselves fighting for the usual positions we used to fight for. Even though maybe the final result left us slightly disappointed, but the race itself was exciting. It was full of good fights. It was always promising pace. Our car was quite kind with the tyres and hopefully it's a good confidence boost for the whole team, including myself.

It's no secret that Toro Rosso lost the way a little bit with an update introduced around the time of the German Grand Prix, which seems to have been rectified now, so how confidently do you approach the remaining races of the championship?

DK: Well, like I said, Singapore gave us good indications. Obviously there were a lot of tests carried out by the people in the team and hopefully there was a few things discovered. Obviously we had a good Singapore but now we need a few more confirmations and hopefully they will arrive here in Sepang, even though the track layout is a bit different, maybe not as favourable as Singapore. Probably it won't be an easy one for us but we will hope to have another confirmation that we are moving in the right direction from Singapore onwards.

Q: You made the announcement in Monza about your retirement at the end of this season, it'll be your 250th grand prix in Abu Dhabi. Do you now arrive at these grands prix between now and the end of the season with a slightly different mindset? Are you determined to enjoy every experience, to take the most out of every grand prix?

FM: Yes, definitely! I'll just enjoy massively doing what I'm doing – since I always did in my life. In a way you can say I have less pressure now – but we do have a lot of pressure with this fight with Force India. I just want to give everything I can to finish well, to get the fourth place in the Championship and enjoy every race, enjoy every moment. I'm still really happy with my decisions so I'm sure there's a lot to do in life for this second step so, as Jenson was saying before, it's a really long career, so even if we are pretty young... y'know you stop pretty young, he's 36, I'm 35 and you're like, retired! That's why there's still a lot of things to do in life. I'm really ready for that and happy. I'll have a little bit more time at home as well. So, yeah, just thinking... so many things for the future and enjoying every race, every moment in different countries, different places. Really it's fantastic to see all the support from the fans. From everybody around the sport. Enjoying the moment.

Q: Esteban, you've finished all of your grands prix so far. How do you assess your performance in qualifying and race compared with your team-mate?

EO: Coming into the season with less experience, of course, it's not an easy thing. We had some ups and downs I think. We are pretty happy with the first grand prix we did. I improved quite a lot during the weekend. Of course it was my first grand prix so the pace was not great but we were pretty happy with that. Then unfortunately in the second qualifying in Monza we had a problem so we couldn't show our pace, but I think we could have done a great result there. And in Singapore it has been a bit more difficult. So, we have to put all the details together and come back stronger for this race.

Q: If you look back through recent history, Alonso, Ricciardo, they all started out in a similar level team to the one you're in at the moment, to learn the ropes in Formula One. Do you think another year at that level would be good for your development – especially, as you say, given that you came in, in a difficult situation quite late this year?

EO: For sure. The more you drive, and more you take experience. Any year, any races would help me. For sure. Getting in, after three races, you start to discover everything and start to build up a strong relationship with the team and see how they work. It's a lot of details that you have to put right and once they are right, you can start to see some performance.

Q: Nico, Mercedes can wrap up its third consecutive Constructors' Championship this weekend. How does this year compare from the team's point of view to the two previous ones. What's stood out for you about this year?

NR: It's been another incredible year really. Every time we think it can never repeat itself and be as good as that again, and yet we manage to do it again. And this year as well now, so early in the season we have the opportunity to clinch the Constructors' Championship, which is phenomenal. Everybody's done an unbelievable job. Very impressive.

Q: It's an open secret that the Mercedes team feel that your qualifying lap in Singapore is the best that you've driven since you've been with them – and Toto Wolff said it was the most complete, I think, performance he'd seen from you across the whole race weekend. What can you take out of that Singapore weekend that will make you a consistently strong competitor to the end of the season?

NR: I don't need to take anything from the Singapore weekend. It was a great result, great weekend and all, so I'm very happy about that, but now it's in the past. Now I'm here in Sepang and ready to go. Of course I believe that I have a great chance to win here as well. Just going to try to go for that.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Nico, you are all the time insisting that you are not thinking about the championship. How can you avoid it when you are leading the championship?

NR: It's not that I don't think about it – I'm aware of the situation, I'm aware of the points and whatever else – that's fine but I try and focus on the race weekend I have in front of me because that's been working really well for me to do that and not think about anything else. That's it. I want to win here in Sepang and I'm going to go for that.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Daily Telegraph) Another one for Nico. You guys leave no stone unturned in trying to beat each other – just out of interest, does that extend to things like the event you and Lewis were doing at the mall the other day? Are there silly little games that go on? Do you try and unsettle each other, nobble each other, anything like that?

NR: It's not quite that extreme, that we'd be doing stuff at the mall, no. It's not. But yes, for sure, we'll be pushing each other very hard on the race track and even off the race track in many different areas, yeah, definitely. It's a great battle and everything counts.

Q: (Chris Lyons- AP) Felipe, the calendar for next season came out with an asterisk next to Brazil saying it's to be confirmed. Are you disappointed with the state of things in Brazil and how confident are you that it will stay on the calendar?

FM: Well, to be honest, I think it's very difficult to answer in a proper way. We are just racing and we don't know what's happened behind (the scenes) with the contracts. Sometimes you just see some pressures over a country because maybe something's not working like Bernie - or who decides - is thinking. We know that you always have pressures around. It's not nice, definitely. Brazil is part of this sport, it's part of Formula One since a very long time so it would be really disappointing to lose a race in Brazil even if I will not be there. But I will be supporting my country for new Brazilian drivers, so I know the situation in Brazil is not really easy for the moment economically, so this is maybe some fact around this. But you never know, maybe this is just some pressure but maybe this can happen as we saw it happened last year in Germany. I hope it will not happen to Sao Paulo, Interlagos. It's also one of the most fun and great races to watch so I hope the best for them, for my country, for Brazil and I hope these guys will still enjoy their race in Brazil.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) To all of you, how will the new tarmac affect your way of driving during the Grand Prix?

Q: Let's start with Jenson; have you done your track walk yet?

JB: Er, no, but I've seen lots of pictures. It's dark so that's a major difference. I think it's going to... with the temperatures that we see here anyway are very high, so if it's clear then the temperatures are going to be very high on track, which obviously has quite a big effect on the way the tyres work. It's very smooth, from what I see. Obviously we're going to try and watch every practice session that runs today. You get a better understanding. What else? And the last corner is obviously very different with the off-camber but yeah, I don't know if it's similar to Sochi or not but it seems like it, the bitumen, the way that the asphalt is. So it might be a completely different circuit, but we won't know until tomorrow, probably get a bit of an understanding from watching GP2 and GP3.

NR: It will be a big challenge because it will be very different and we all need to adapt to the new asphalt, which we don't know how it's going to handle here.

EO: I have been around on a track walk but it will be my first time on this track so I come here as I don't know how it was before.

NH: Neutral, same for everyone but generally the smooth tarmac... we've seen recently we perform quite well on that so hopefully again here.

DK: I think I just copy and paste Jenson's answer. It was perfect. It's enough.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS.NL) For the five drivers who raced here before: what is your best Sepang memory?

JB: I'm the oldest. Yeah, I won here which was a pretty good memory, back in '09. It was also quite a strange race. The rain was so severe that we had to red flag the race and it wasn't restarted. I won the race but I got half points which was a bit of a pain. It's always been a great circuit to race on, it's also the place where I scored my first podium in 2004. I was running in third place in 2002 as well. On the last lap my suspension failed and handed the third place to Michael Schumacher. So that would have been my first podium. So this place... I've got lots of memories from here.

FM: Well, actually I always love this place, the circuit, the layout. I never won but I twice started on pole position, 2007, 2008. I will keep those memories but I was never on the podium here.

Amazing. But I really love the circuit. I've had some great races, even if I wasn't on the podium. Hope this one will be a better one.

NR: Just the track which is a really cool track to drive on. That's it.

NH: I think my best or favourite memory would be qualifying 2010, coming here in my rookie year. I think it was only my second event, qualifying went pretty well, like full wets. In the conditions it was going pretty well, I think I qualified fifth or something so that was good fun and probably my best memory here.

DK: Yeah, actually quite a special track because I did my first ever race here in Formula BMW and won my first ever race in Formula BMW in single seaters, so it's quite cool memories.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Esteban, you started in the Formula Three European championship when you were very young, you won the championship, you beat future Formula One star Max Verstappen. Then you moved to GP3, in your first season you won the championship. Now you're in Formula One, the reality is very different. Can you make a comment on the main difficulties you are facing, the challenge is maybe higher than you expected or less?

EO: No, I don't think it's harder than I was expecting. I was expecting it to be hard, coming after eleven Grands Prix or twelve Grands Prix. It's never easy if you come in any championship at halfway through the season, all the drivers have had time to work on everything, on all the points and you arrive, you have to catch up everything again, so of course it's tough. But at the end, you are working for the same thing and the important thing are the tracks. For sure there is much more things to do in F1 and you work with many more people. But at the end, it's the same thing and the track is the important bit.

Ends