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Spanish Grand Prix

Thursday Press Conference Transcript

PART ONE: DRIVERS – Fernando ALONSO (McLaren), Carlos SAINZ (Toro Rosso), Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Fernando, what are you hoping to take out of this weekend in Barcelona?

Fernando ALONSO: Let's see what we can do here. Definitely our moment right now is not the best. We have been underperforming in the first four races and we didn't finish any of the grands prix yet, in my case, so definitely, you know, the first step is to improve, which is what we've been doing so far, which is not difficult. The second is to find how competitive we can be here on this track, which is quite different compared with the last couple of races. Plus, with the upgrades that everyone brings here, normally, things may change, we need to find out where we are, in which positions we can move this weekend. Second is reliability. We need to raise our game and hopefully finish with both cars this race and accumulate some mileage. Some things that we need to put in place, starting this weekend, for the rest of the season. So hopefully this is the starting point of a new championship for us.

Q: How have you and team dealt with the Did Not Start in Sochi and what news is there on the recovery programme with Honda?

FA: Well, actually I still don't know what happened exactly in Sochi. We had problems with the ERS on the formation laps. I tried to restart the whole thing during the formation lap a couple of times, but on the last attempt the car didn't start. Yeah, really, really bad for us, and as a team not being able to start the race with Stoffel's car in Bahrain, with my side of the garage in Russia, so completely unacceptable and we need to, as I said, raise our game here in terms of reliability and hopefully finish with both cars.

Q: Two weeks to go until your Indy 500 race debut. You've had some practice at the Brickyard, how's it going?

FA: Did you watch it?

Yeah, on the stream.

FA: OK. You really have nothing to do! I mean yeah it was different. Probably as I expected it to be. The car felt quite different. Running this asymmetric set-up definitely feels not normal to drive so you need to adjust a little bit your mind set going into the run, into the first corner, but yeah, at the end of the day I felt a little bit more comfortable. I was able to feel some of the set-up changes and things like that, because I think the driving technique is quite different, so step-by-step. I did the first one, which is just the first feeling

with the car, but now, when, I think next week we start the free practice and you start running with other people around etc I think I will hopefully build a little bit more confidence and start understanding what the car needs and what I need as well to be prepared for May 28th. So yeah, two intense weeks ahead but pretty much looking forward.

Q: Carlos, you've scored points in three of four races this season, sometimes after qualifying outside the top 10. Is the battle with Williams, Force India and Renault one Toro Rosso feel you can win this year?

Carlos SAINZ: Definitely. I think as a target Toro Rosso was very clear at the beginning of the year that they wanted to finish P5 in the championship. I think it has been an interesting start to the season, having five teams fighting for probably P4 as a best result. In my opinion, at the moment it looks like Williams has the upper hand on every one of us, having a car that is closer to the Red Bull than to us. But we are definitely making steps, little by little we are taking our chances. We have 11 points from my side, 13 from the team. We are getting there and hopefully the upgrade this race help us to get closer to them because they are that tiny step ahead at the moment.

Q: And you're happy with how you're driving and the steps you're making?

CS: Yeah, I think I can be pretty happy. It has been probably my best start to a Formula One season up until now. Extra year of experience is obviously helping but I think both qualifying and race have been quite good, so I cannot complain. Pretty solid start and we need to keep going like that.

Q: Red Bull has a heavily updated car this weekend. What are you bringing and how much of the key to your season lies in the engine update from Renault whenever it comes?

CS: Well, we are obviously bringing our upgrades, probably like any other team, we just hope that our upgrades are better than the others, particularly to those midfield [teams]. I don't look to what Ferrari, Mercedes or Red Bull are bringing because they are obviously in another league, with totally different budgets and totally different performance on track. Probably my only concern is to make sure that those upgrades give us those tenths we need and the others don't improve, like Williams, Renault and Haas, even McLaren, they don't improve as much as we do.

Q: Sebastian, your best start to a season since 2011 I believe and you're 13 points clear in the Drivers' standings. It seems that this year the emphasis has shifted from Ferrari and the others trying to find a way past Mercedes to Mercedes trying find a way past you. Is that the way it feels?

Q: Sebastian VETTEL: I think we are obviously in a much better position this year than in previous years but it's still fairly early. I think this will be an important race. As you touched on, it's usually the time people start to bring a couple more bits, but then again, if you look at the last, I don't know, 10 years, it's not any more that fixed date where you bring a new car. The top teams tend to bring stuff nearly every race. I don't know, to answer your question I don't feel it's like that. Mercedes obviously had a phenomenal run the last couple of years and they are still the ones to beat, not just race by race but overall they have been the dominant team and it's difficult to break that but I think we are trying our best.

Q: You mentioned the upgrades. Obviously they are going to be crucial to you maintaining your challenge. Do you have as much confidence in Ferrari's ability to deliver the upgrades as you have had in the car they built you at the beginning of the season?

SV: I think it was impossible to have any expectation going into this season because everything was so new – I think that's fair for all of us. Plus, the year we had last year was a little bit up and down, a bit difficult, so I think we just looked after ourselves and tried to build the best car we can and I think there's no doubt looking at the results now that we have the right group of people on board to be able to build the car you need to win races, we've proven that in two out of four races. But, as you said, it all matters what you keep doing. It doesn't matter what you have done. I know that we have the same people and I believe that they will bring the upgrades we need to keep fighting.

Q: Pole position in Sochi. We all know that pole is crucial here in Barcelona. Is that where you're going to put your focus on during the free practice sessions?

SV: Yeah, quali and race, so no surprises. Obviously this is a track we know very well but the conditions usually are very different when we come here in May compared to February or March. So I think you are always aiming for pole positions, so if I could choose then I would put myself on pole, but it would be fairly boring if you could choose on Thursday, so I'm looking forward to tomorrow and then the build up through Saturday. Then we try to do the best quali we can and prepare the race as much as possible as well.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Sef Harding– Xero Xone News) A question for Fernando: You have an impressive collection of cars here in Spain that you had the pleasure to drive in. Will this Indy car be added to that collection in future at your museum?

FA: Yeah, it's coming. After the race the car will be in the museum as well. Every car I jumped in from 2004 or something like that, it's always in my contract that it will be in my museum afterwards. This one is no different.

Q: (Mike Doodson – Auto Action) Seb, those last 15 laps at Sochi were pretty exciting. I couldn't help wondering if you had caught up to Valtteri would you have been able to go past him. And I'm wondering if because the overtaking this year is even less than last year, is there any value to increasing the DRS, either the distance or the gap between cars to improve the chances. Would you have been able to overtake more easily if that had been the case?

SV: I don't think I'm in favour of increasing the DRS zones. I think we have been... a couple of years ago when we introduced it to some races where it was way too easy, which was great when you were behind because you just sailed past, but that's not the idea of an overtake. I think it's normal that you have races where there is more overtaking or less. But for many reasons in Sochi it was quite difficult to overtake. The tyres lasted fairly well, so you were able to push whether you were in front or behind, so there wasn't much degradation helping you maybe to come with an advantage on tyres. The track layout doesn't make it very easy to follow close, which we have seen in the past as well, historically here for example with the last corner, which makes it quite difficult to get close for the straight line. Personally, of course I would love to be close and try to do something, but then again it's also a challenge, so you need to not just arrive and drive past or have some tool that puts you side by side. You have to work for it – try different lines, do different things. I think in Sochi I just arrived too late. Really it was the last two or three laps where I was maybe getting closer. But before that it was as exciting for me as well to try and chase him down and to try to do something at the end. Obviously it would have been great if it had worked, it didn't, but I was looking forward to it maybe as much as you were and some days it works and some days it doesn't. I think we shouldn't get into a window again where it's artificial. It is difficult to pass but equally if you make it, which maybe sometimes you will, or somebody else will, then you should get credit for it, if you don't then you didn't make it.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) Fernando, I read an interview in which you said next season for sure you will be in Formula One again, with McLaren or with any other team. Does it mean you will consider coming back to Ferrari as well?

FA: As I said at the beginning of the year, this is my last year with the contract I have now with McLaren. I will have to think a little bit after the summer, because now it is quite a busy period and now plus the Indy 500 thing, it will not be the time to think any further than this summer. But yeah, around September or October I will need to consider what I will do next year. If it's time to find other challenges outside Formula One or if Formula One will be an opportunity to win the championship, which is my main goal. I'm very open to anything. I think with this year's cars and the 2017 regulations, the cars are good to drive. I think Formula One is back in a way. We see this real power of efficiency, corner speed, things we were missing in the last couple of years. The cars look nice from the outside, with the big tyres, everything, so I like this Formula One. So my intention or my first priority is to race next year here and not only to race, I want to win. Now that I have not any more obligations with McLaren... I'm happy with the team, but we are not winning, so if from here to September or October we are in a position where I see clearly a possibility to win in 2018, I will be more than happy to stay with the team. If it's not the case, I will be more than happy to talk to anyone.

Q: (Ian Parkes – New York Times) Question for Fernando. Fernando, it's been a few months now since Ron departed the scene and Zak came onboard. Can you give us some idea of the culture change that's gone on behind the scenes over those few months, what Zak has brought to the team and what benefit you can see going forward to push McLaren back up to the front again?

FA: Well, I think they are very different and I think there is a not a magic solution, or a magic way to lead a team to success. I think, you know, Ron had a fantastic time in the past in McLaren with a lot of success and now with Zak things are a little bit more open, inside the team but also for you guys, outside, how you can approach McLaren now is different, on the commercial side, also in a technical side. I think also with Zak the biggest difference is the vision and the approach for the brand, for McLaren, which is a little bit different and wants to span the McLaren in different worlds and different categories. We'll see with the Indy 500, I think it is not only this year: I think McLaren will be in the Indy 500 for the future. I think McLaren will be in the 24 Hours of Le Mans in the future, as they were in the past, when they won the Indy 500, when they won Le Mans. So that's the biggest change we can feel inside McLaren, that Zak will not only concentrate in Formula One, will concentrate in McLaren as a race team in different series and the most important thing is obviously to sell cars and to sell the McLaren cars you need to open to new markets and especially the US market is probably the biggest one.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Question to Carlos and Fernando. Carlos, how do you live the difficulties Fernando has had this year in his car, and Fernando, how do you rate the progress Carlos made in Formula One?

CS: Well, I think obviously very similar to all you guys. I think that Fernando at the moment with the talent and experience he has, he should be fighting for world titles and he hasn't had the chance for a lot of years now, so I really hope one day he gets back to those positions to be fighting because I'm sure he will do a good job, like he has always done, and I hope I can join him in those battles soon, and that's it. Nothing really to say, I hope he gets back on top soon.

FA: For my question, Carlos, I think everyone can see the progress that Carlos made in the last three years. He started already impressing a lot of people because I think he has the talent, he won the smaller categories until F1 and I think this young generation, they are very well prepared and they arrive into Formula One with a lot of already practice, simulator, they follow a program in the junior academies, from the Red Bull academy or the

Ferrari academy or wherever, so I think they arrive to Formula One and it is not a shock. They are ready. They are prepared. If you add that preparation to the talent that Carlos has, already in the first year he was at the very, very high level. Now with experience, I think he's one of the best on the grid. Hopefully I can fight a little bit this year, like last year that he started well but then he dropped behind at the end of the year, so we'll see this year.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Autobild Motorsport) A question to Fernando. If you had theoretically a free choice to get one of the four engines next year for McLaren, which would you take?

FA: I think Honda, no? OK, three engines. I cannot answer. You always want the best engine on your car and McLaren and Honda, they have this partnership, which is a long-term partnership with, I think, a very strong commitment from both. Now things are not going in the way they thought in the beginning but they are putting a lot of effort to improve the situation. So, I think the McLaren-Honda name and partnership will be for the long-term. So, I think they need to find performance and extract power from the engine. Hopefully we can see the progress in the very short term and this year fight for something big.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / Speed Sport) Carlos, as you say, you've improved and you're a better driver after another year of experience. Any specific areas or is it a case of little things everywhere?

CS: No specific areas, to be honest. I feel like since I arrived to F1 I have just improved in every single area that you can imagine. It's just experience. It comes race-by-race. You feel also a bit more confident, you get to know a lot more your car, your team. The human side also, from the team. You have better relationships with everyone, you can optimise every single part of your car, of your personal performance. All of this keeps adding and you just perform a little bit better and better every race weekend and you are able to sometimes shine a bit more; other weekends not so much because you have a bit more bad luck or something but the importance is to keep learning – as I've been doing up until now – and when you have a chance, like in China, for example, try to shine a bit extra, to show a bit yourself. Yeah, I think that's it. Experience... and more experience.

Q: (Pilar Celebrovsky – The Paddock Magazine) There has been some remarks in the Italian media saying that you may go to Mercedes for next year. Would you like to say something about it or is it something you don't really care about?

SV: I don't know! I don't... I didn't know. Is it coming from Italy then? Maybe you should ask the Italians; they seem to know more than I do. I think the situation is clear. Obviously, the main focus is on this year, that's not a secret and it's not a line that I drop, it's a fact for all of us inside the team. Obviously, we find ourselves in a very good position this year and that's what we want to keep and to use. Everything else is not that important. There have also been some rumours, I think, in previous years. I don't know. Maybe some are from Italy, some are from Germany... in that case maybe you should refer to the Italians.

Q: (Ottavio Daviddi – Tuttosport) Question to Sebastian. Fernando talks about his future. My question for you, if you stay in Ferrari, are you open to have such a driver, such a personality, as Fernando as team-mate – or not?

SV: In general, you should be ready to race whoever comes along. I think Fernando has the reputation he has for many reasons, not just for two championships, for many other reasons, many races, many years he's been around. So, y'know, I'm signing my contract, I'm not signing other people's contract so it's not my decision – but as I've said, I'm ready to race whoever comes along. I'm sure everybody is different: the team-mates that I've had, they were very different, not just as a person but also you can imagine as drivers:

different styles, different strengths, different weaknesses. It's all something that you share, a lot more open, and you can improve, probably make another step depending on who's by your side. It's always new input but I think the way we are setup right now, we find ourselves very happy and, as I said, the focus is on this year, despite the fact that for next year, there is nothing on paper but the mentality or the approach inside the team is that we want to focus on what we have in front of us.

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Sebastian, on track battle's one thing with Lewis, when it comes to psychological battle with him, do you think that you have the edge over him in that department?

SV: No

Q: Why not?

SV: I don't do psychological battles, so...

Q: But there's no pressure on you really, when you think about it – you're not expected to deliver so much so in the car, they're defending champions, all that sort of stuff...

SV: It's perfect for me then. If you don't expect me to deliver anything, I can only win, so... I think obviously there's some stuff that can be interpreted as psychological battles but I'm not into that at all. I love driving and that's what I really care about. Whether there's some signs or whatever that you pass back and forth. I think he has the upper hand, I'm not clever enough to interpret them, to read them.

Q: (Iolande Skinner – Motorsport Monday) This is for Sebastian. Who would you like to be fighting in the last corner of the race – and why?

SV: Well, obviously, I'm there...

FA: Fight with me... overtake on the straight.

SV: yeah, it would be great to see you. I don't know, the race is far away. I guess you're referring to who will win the race so if we can be in that fight, up to the last corner, then that would be great. You can pick one, I don't mind, as long as you pick me as the second one or first one, whatever, it's fine.

PART TWO: DRIVERS – Marcus Ericsson (Sauber), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Max Verstappen (Red Bull)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Marcus, Sauber's announced an engine partnership with Honda, are you pleased with the Honda deal and does it push you towards a long-term commitment with the team?

Marcus ERICSSON: I think looking at it right now, it's obviously not maybe the best decision because Honda is struggling quite a lot at the moment but I think in the longer term for the team, I think it can be a very clever decision because I'm sure Honda sooner or later will get it together – but yeah, let's wait and see. At the moment, it's maybe not the best one.

Q: And what impact does it have on this season in terms of preparation for next year. Does it impact the way you approach things? Does it impact you as drivers?

ME: No, not really, I wouldn't say. We have the engine we have at the moment and we need to maximise our season and focus on that. And then, as every team, at some point you need to start looking at the next season and focus the development for next year but at the moment all our focus is on this season and trying to catch up that midfield group.

Q: Lewis, you've been very consistent for so long, it seemed odd that Sochi went the way it did – have you figured out what happened?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, it was just a bunch of small things all added up in one pot. Nothing in particular, no single one thing that was bigger than another, that just led us in slightly the wrong direction. Should be better this weekend.

Q: The team was talking about the difficulty of getting these tyres into a particular window. Is that a contributing factor? Is it less likely to be a factor this weekend, for example?

LH: It's a tyre issue in the sense that the tyre's working range is quite small, so yeah, the whole weekend I generally wasn't in the right window with it.

Q: Obviously if you couldn't win, it was a good job that your team-mate Valtteri Bottas managed to finish ahead of Vettel. How pleased were you personally for Valtteri and what do you expect from him now that he's got that first win under his belt?

LH: Well, I've said from the beginning of the season that he was in competition, so it's no surprise that he would eventually get a win. But I was actually very happy. You saw at the end of the race I could at least be happy and share in the glory of the team beating the Ferraris still and keeping us in the lead of the Constructors' Championship. I was proud of what we had achieved – I just wish that I could have backed him up, in the sense of getting a 1-2, but we can work on that maybe this weekend.

Q: Max, it's 12 months since you sat in this room, having just made the switch to the Red Bull team and what a weekend that turned out to be for you. Your learning curve has been more or less vertical since then, but I wonder in what areas do you feel that you've made real improvement, from 12 months ago to now?

Max VERSTAPPEN: Difficult to say...

LH: You've got your driving licence now!

MV: I already had that back then.

LH: No you didn't!

MV: Five months already.

LH: I was saying he's got his driving licence now. It's a big step.

MV: Yeah, I think it's just general experience, both in life and in racing but nothing major, I would say, in terms of driving the car faster or anything. It all adds up to little things and if you feel better in the car, you understand the car better.

Q: What about the way you deal with these guys and particularly the ones at the front?

MV: Well yeah, you're driving more amongst them compared to what I was doing before but that was always the aim and the target once I moved into Formula One. Natural process, I guess.

Q: So we know you have a heavily updated car here. Can you put in context for us just how different it is and what were the key areas for you that needed to be addressed in how it handles?

MV: I think, first of all, everybody is bringing quite a few updates. Hopefully our updates will bring us a little bit more to the front but I think in every area we can always improve so I think that's what we are aiming to do with the car. Yeah, you see a few differences on the car and hopefully we can close the gap a little bit here already and then go on from there.

Q: And in terms of what you wanted to fix and how it handles?

MV: Every area, it needs to be faster everywhere.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Sef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Lewis, you've often been referred to as the Jedi Knight of F1 and it is Star Wars – I refer to you as the Jedi Knight of F1 - and this is the month that we celebrate Star Wars so the question to you is what colour Lifesaver would you chose? This is a very important question because it's going to go on social media because it determines what side of the force you are on?

LH: Well, firstly it's kind of exciting to have a lot of different questions, much nicer different questions! I want to be purple but I'm a huge fan of Star Wars, obviously good friends with George [Lucas] and a huge admirer or what he created, Star Wars. I think it's frigging amazing, excited for the... seen every one. I'm excited to see what comes next.

Q: (Oana Popoiu – F1Zone.net) To all of you: Kimi Raikkonen drove half of the Russian Grand Prix knowing he had Valtteri Bottas behind and not Lewis Hamilton. How important is it for you to know what driver is behind you? Do you drive differently, knowing it's one or another?

ME: No. Usually you know who is behind you if you're in a close fight with them. If there's someone who is not that close then it doesn't really matter but I would say there are some drivers who are maybe more aggressive than others but then in the end we all respect each other and race in a good way.

LH: I always know who's behind me but it doesn't really make any difference.

MV: Yeah, I think it shouldn't make a difference and if you don't know, look at your pit board. It's standing on the pit board.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) Lewis, this is obviously the first year you've come back to Spain since your crash last year with Nico. I was just wondering firstly what you drew from that experience as a driver and as a person and secondly of the subsequent reports that you threatened to... or you offered to quit Mercedes after the crash? So did you offer to quit Mercedes after the crash with Nico last year in Spain?

LH: I did not.

Q: (Phil Duncan – PA) And secondly what did you learn as a person and as a driver from that experience?

LH: Not much really, it was a racing incident. I've had lots of crashes during my career and that was just another one. We got through it pretty smoothly or as smooth as it could be, I would say, and yeah, went on and won many more races after that.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) To all drivers, starting with you Lewis, you said that the main problem you had in the last race was to take the tyre in the

window temperature and here you have the hardest tyres that Pirelli supplies in Formula One. Do you think it can be an issue here?

LH: The tyres are definitely... there seems to be quite a small working window and it's a new tyre for us also. I think we are all learning as we go from race to race and I think for some cars perhaps it works immediately than for others. There's different preparations. If you look at Bahrain, for example, the Red Bulls drove as slow as they could on the laps to prepare for qualifying but still had the tyres ready whereas the Ferraris were flat out through the warm-up laps so there's a different approach for everyone. It's a new tyre which is exciting. They are very very hard tyres so a hard, safe tyre basically. It's going to be interesting this weekend to see how they work.

MV: I think in general in Sochi it's not a lot of grip and then combined with a tricky warm-up, it just makes it a bit more difficult. It was quite difficult to get the tyres in the window and you could see a lot of build laps or second timed laps which were faster so I think that will be a little bit different here where the tarmac is a bit more rough so harder on the tyres. But yeah, we have quite hard compounds so we'll see. I think in general you always try to go for the softer compounds, also here but yeah, I think the warm-up is still critical.

ME: I agree with the guys but the only thing really apart from that I could say is that I think this weekend we could probably live with another step softer. I think the hard tyre is not really useable. I think a supersoft for qualifying would be quite nice.

Q: (Sef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Max, there was a question about there was some disappointment in Sochi about the race and there wasn't much overtaking. Do you disagree with that, do you feel that there is better racing, at least in the last four races, that there has been a better show for everyone to watch now?

MV: Compared to...?

Q: (Sef Harding – Xiro Xone News) Compared to Sochi.

MV: You mean last year? This year's better racing compared to... Yeah, I was a bit surprised that there was only one overtaking (manoeuvre) in Sochi. Yeah, it's just harder to follow with the cars. And then with tyres which have a long life, only one pit stop and I think you could have done no pit stops actually in Sochi. It makes it all a bit harder. I think in Bahrain where you're struggling a bit more with the tyres you could see there were five cars behind each other, challenging a bit more so yeah, I think we need to be at least a bit softer on the tyres or something to get a bit more exciting racing again but then on the other hand the cars are wider so they create a bigger wake around them, once you are behind one another you lose a lot of downforce especially with the higher cornering speeds we had. It all makes it a bit more tricky.

Q: (Mark Tisshaw – Autocar) Lewis, what do you think of the progress Max has made over the past 12 months?

LH: Pretty bad, to be honest! He burst into Formula One, obviously did an amazing job and I remember last year the great race that he had when he moved to Red Bull and he's remained a strong component. He's obviously grown, he's got a long way to go, still 18 still?

MV: 19

LH: So he's got an incredible career up ahead of him.

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Lewis, last year (here) obviously was a massive talking point. Have you spoken to Nico since he's retired? I know that you share the same

Monaco apartment (block) but I just wondered if you've bumped into each other just to have a chat or anything like that?

LH: We have not. I think that's the... actually the one time I've seen him I was running through the streets in London. It's kind of a strange... running from Covent Garden all the way down to the Thames and the Thames down to Battersea kind of area and back up near Parliament and I was just running on a random street and someone started running behind me and then there was a crowded sidewalk but someone started running behind me and I looked back and it's... Nico's obviously seen me on the road as he's going through somewhere in London and he's jumped out (of the car) and run alongside me so we stopped and had a chat for a bit there. That's the first time that I've seen him since...

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Who was quicker?

LH: Well, he was trying to catch up so...

Q: (Pilar Celebrovsky – The Paddock Magazine) Max, Lewis said in China that he and other drivers still learn from you and the way you drive in wet conditions, but what can you learn from Lewis in normal conditions?

MV: I think it's a bit tricky when you're not in the exact same team because then you have a lot more information, but still if you see some races, some overtakes, some starts, some shit races, what happened during the race, whatever, tyre management, you always look to your competitors as well, what they are doing, what they are doing differently in terms of lines throughout the whole weekend. You always try to learn something, every single weekend.

Q: (Arjan Schouten – AD Sportwerld) Max, could you tell me something about your feelings, coming to this Grand Prix after a year? There's a lot of Dutch people at the side of the track, thousands I think. Does that affect you in any way, tensionwise, that sort of thing?

MV: I don't think it did last year. I think last year was more intense. It's always good to come back here but it's 2017 now, 2016 has gone. Of course it was a very positive weekend but now I just want to look ahead and do my race.

Q: (Lennart Bloemhof – Volkskrant) Max, last year you earned the title of race winner in F1, that's a title for life. Can you say something about that and did it change your status in F1?

MV: It was nice but I want to win more races than just that one. It's nice but that's not what I'm here for, for one single victory. I want more.

Q: (Rebecca Clancy – The Times) Lewis you said in Russia that it was a few things that came together, nothing in particular. Do you have confidence this weekend that you won't have those same problems and just secondly, is it nice having Roscoe here and is Coco here as well and does it kind of keep you grounded and do you enjoy having them around during race weekends?

LH: I think coming in to this weekend I think we definitely have a better understanding... a good understanding of what went wrong on our side of the garage and there's been a huge amount of analysis as there always is from race to race. I think we've definitely grown from the experience, both having a win, having a fast car and obviously having a car that struggled in so many areas. I definitely think we are better equipped now but I can't really say it's going to be better this weekend. I assume it will be but there are lots of different challenges this weekend with new upgrades for everyone. But we'll be doing a lot of work tomorrow to get the car in the right place. I'm always on the move so it's great to be able to

have your animal, pet with you and I'm sure... this one here is stressing a little bit about the fact that I've got the dog in here but...

MV: He's sleeping.

LH: Yes, he's sleeping but I thought that... I don't think anyone in the whole of history has probably brought their dog to the press conference so I thought I'd try and do something new.

Q: (Giles Richards – Guardian) Lewis, can you tell us whether you think Valtteri is a credible threat to you in the battle for the World Championship this year and secondly, whether you've had any discussion with the team about when they might back one or the other of you to go for the Drivers' championship?

LH: I've not had a chat about the backing off because there's no need to. And of course he's a credible competitor, he was when he joined. I think it was many of you and perhaps people who are fans, whatever, came with preconceived ideas of how he was going to perform and he's proved everyone wrong so fair play to him and he's going to remain a competitor through the rest of the year so the fight will go on and we've stated our relationship with a really great foundation I think, a respectful foundation and I think that will continue.

Q: (Iolande Skinner – Motorsport Monday) Marcus has the change to the Honda engine for next year... how's that affected you mentally? Are you feeling more motivated or less motivated? What effect has that had on you?

ME: First of all, I only have a contract for this year so I have to wait and see for that but like I said before, for the team, I think in the longer term it's a good decision. Shorter term, I think we have to wait and see how Honda performs for the rest of the year, to be certain what Sauber gets for the beginning of next year. But yeah, for me, all my focus now is on this season. We have the Ferrari power unit that we need to make the most of and yeah, develop our car as good as we can and try and make as good results as possible.

Ends