



Press Information

2019 Hungarian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 01.08.2019

DRIVERS – Daniil KVIYAT (Toro Rosso), Robert KUBICA (Williams), Lance STROLL (Racing Point), Kevin MAGNUSSEN (Haas), Romain GROSJEAN (Haas)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Daniil, if we could start with you. It's been a whirlwind few days for you with that podium finish last time out and the birth of your daughter. Have your feet touched the ground yet?

Daniil KVIYAT: Yes. I mean, it's OK, we are already here in Hungary now but talking about last week it was a quite special 24, or 48 hours, either way you want to look at it. Obviously I found out on Saturday night that I became a father, that my daughter is born and is doing great, so it's a great feeling – but obviously the next day there was a race to do. It was important to stay focused on it. The race was great as well. It's a podium. So, many things happened in 24 hours for me and, yeah, fantastic feeling. Happy few days after and now we're here.

Q: Just tell us about your schedule in those following days. Where have you been?

DK: Went straight to hospital on Sunday night, slept there with them – not too much sleep straight away after the race. So, for me, it was good. And then just home until leaving here to Hungary. Bit of recovery between races, light training but obviously always visiting Kelly and our daughter. And that's it. Yesterday I arrived here.

Q: What was the reception like in the Formula 1 paddock to your podium. Did you get a 7am phone call from Dr Marko on Monday morning?

DK: No. You should tell me! You're a journalist, how was the reception. Generally, talking about the team, everyone was very happy. I think first podium in 11 years for our team. It was a fantastic achievement and I think we were very happy. Everyone. Every member of the team. I was so happy to see that everyone was so happy in the team. When I crossed the start-finish line it was a very special feeling. A lot of emotions. I really enjoyed those few hours after the race. It was unforgettable.

Q: Robert, talking of happy vibes in a team, there was certainly a happy Williams team late on Sunday evening when news came through that you've got the point. You've scored many World Championship points in your career – 274 – but how different was this one to the ones that came before because of what it meant to Williams?

Robert KUBICA: Yeah, I mean, you know, it's a bit mixed feelings in the end because of course it's good to have this one point on the scoreboard but the way it came is for sure is not the way you would expect. Of course, it was a crazy race, many mistakes. We managed to stay on track, although our pace was questionable but still, managed to keep it on the black. And then, with Alfa being penalised, we gained two positions, so it meant that we would be tenth, which is for sure good – but still we have to keep working, keep pushing and definitely this point is somehow... thanks to the guys which are doing a great job on track, pushing really hard, we are really not having a great moment but still, Hockenheim was also thanks to them.

Q: What's your realistic assessment of the upgrades the team brought to Hockenheim?

RK: Realistic, well, it's good to have them. I think it's something for which they've been working for long. We do see some improvements. Of course it's difficult to judge and compare Silverstone to Hockenheim: completely different tracks ambient temperature, so all those things were not easy to have clear judgement. Our guys can see the improvement in the data – but I think everyone is improving, so you know in order to close the gap we need to make bigger improvements compared to our competition and this is not easy with Formula 1 standards: all the teams are pushing hard – so it is a big battle, I think even more at home in the factory, that the people are working hard but you know it's so difficult with current Formula 1 teams to close the gap to them.

Q: Lance, fourth was a great haul of points for you at Hockenheim. Are you sensing an upward curve from the team from now on.

Lance STROLL: Yeah, it was a great result. Like you said, a lot of points. We were really happy about that. I am sensing some improvement. I definitely think we took a step in Hockenheim, looking at our pace throughout the weekend, Friday, Saturday, we were much more competitive than we've been in recent events, which is always a good thing. That being said, it's still very, very tight in the midfield and every tenth counts. I'm sure it will be very track-dependent from now until the end of the season – which tracks suit our car, more than others. But yeah, it was a great Sunday but also a much better weekend in terms of performance and where we've been throughout the weekend in comparison to other weekends.

Q: So, more performance in Hockenheim but just looking at the season so far, as a whole, how has this year compared to your previous two seasons in Formula One?

LS: Every year is unique in its own way. When I reflect on the last couple of years, I definitely think that the sport is much more competitive than it was two years ago. Looking back at 2017 when I came into it, it was... yeah, there were much bigger gaps between the teams and I think, at the time, coming into the weekend, when I was at Williams, we had a pretty good idea where we'd be relative to the competition. And in the race it was, yeah, there was definitely more guarantee of scoring points – and now you really see tight margins between the teams and very close racing in the midfield. Last year, of course, was a challenging season for me at Williams. We didn't really have the pace to score points like we did in 2017. When I look at this year in comparison to a couple of years ago, it's definitely become much more competitive, the sport – which is a good thing. I think, hopefully, in the near future, we can start seeing that from first place onwards where we can be battling between teams every event.

Q: I'd like to come on to Kevin and Romain together now. First up, congratulations on the double points finish in Hockenheim, however the race marked the third time you guys have hit each other on track this year: Spain; Silverstone and, of course, Hockenheim. I just want to ask why this keep happening? Kevin, perhaps we could start with you?

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: I don't know really. I think it's... you know... it's happened a few times this year and, in terms of... it happened in Silverstone and it had a consequence for both of us. We punctured. I think that was pretty unlucky, to have two cars puncturing for such a small contact. There were no bad intentions from either of us in that moment. It was just... we came together and then punctured. Later in the race you see other cars flying into each other, flying over the track and nothing happened. Got to look at that as well to say, bad luck really. That's pretty much it.

Romain, your thoughts

Romain GROSJEAN: We love each other. That's why we get on, have a bit of a kiss on track. No, I think, as Kevin said, there's been a bit of bad luck in Silverstone. I think the relationship, people could think that it doesn't look good but actually the relationship with Kevin is really good. We phone each other once a week or so. We sat down and said, 'what can we do better', just to make sure that's not happening again. Obviously we've got the same car, so it's happening that we are side-by-side on track more often than with the Mercedes, for example. Yeah, there are things we can probably do better. I think the most important is that we always try to do our best for the team, and give our best and maybe just the cursor wasn't well positioned on some of the occasions we had, and we just going to make sure we get better from there. Honestly, the relationship is very good and we actually like – well, I like working with Kevin, maybe he doesn't – but I think he likes it also. We work well together and we get on nicely.

And Kevin likes working with Romain?

KM: Absolutely.

RG: Just don't say no now...

KM: I think in the heat of the moment, we're blaming each other on the radio and stuff like that – but what people don't see is that we get together between the races and talk it through and try to be constructive and move on in a constructive way. Apart from those incidents on track, I feel that we have a pretty good working relationship. And actually, Romain is a cool guy, and we actually have a good time when we go to work. So, it's being blown out of proportion a little bit. I know you guys love a bit of a conflict and stuff like that, so... but it isn't as bad as it looks.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Péter Városi – Racing Line) A question for Robert. First of all, you really have good heritage here at the Hungaroring, you've scored many points here. Do you think this year, with the Williams, at this track, where you don't need so much power, can you score again?

RK: Well, I think, actually, Hungary has never been very lucky for me. I don't remember how many points I scored. I think the power is the only area where we are not lacking anything in our car, so power, thanks to Mercedes' power unit, is the strongest area of our car. This track is very complex. I think there are sections that require a lot of mechanical and aero grip, so I would say it's not the kind of track where we will be closer to the competition than others.

Q: (Luke Smith – crash.net) Romain and Kevin, Guenther has said that he is going to have to take a firmer approach with you two to stop these clashes on track – rules of engagement, things like that. What's your response to that? Do you feel it is necessary to put this in place between you two? Is it disappointing that that action has to be taken?

RG: No, I think again we are here to do the best for the team and if that's the solution, the short-term fix, then why not. I think, as I say. We're not here fighting for the first or second place in the world championship. I don't really give a damn if I finish 14th or 16th at the end. We don't have a fast car at the minute and the focus is on getting that car to work well. The team has been reverting me back to the car from Melbourne. I have been running for three events now, just trying to understand everything, so I think the bigger picture, the big keys, is to understand how we get faster and better, how we can come back in the Constructors' Championship and to make sure that the future of the team is not compromised by a non-understanding of the car.

Q: Kevin, rules of engagement?

KM: At the end of the day it doesn't really matter what we think, we will just respect what is being said and required by the team. I can understand the team's point of view. We had a pretty bad experience in Silverstone and clearly they want to avoid that happening again and we're just going to deal with it in the way we're required and make the best for the team, as Romain said.

Q: (Eva Vandor – HVG) Daniil, congratulations on so many levels – becoming a father, on getting back to the podium and getting back to Hungary as well, it's been a while. Can you tell us a little bit about the mental transformation of the last few years – from being out of F1 to getting back to the podium?

DK: Well, I think it was important to realize the points that you can improve as a driver and as a person before my comeback to Formula 1. Obviously it wasn't easy to lose the seat in the Formula 1 and at some point it was thought that there was no way back in for me. But since I got the call; back in, it was important to come back very prepared and better mentally prepared as well, I think. I think now all this work is paying off and I'm very happy with how things are working out. I'm happy with the people around me, the team around me, how we work on things. It's important that now I feel a much better driver than I was in the past. It's also very important also to back this up with strong results. This year in general has been strong and I think we can continue in this way. I'm really enjoying this, so hopefully we can keep going.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports) Good to see, Romain and Kevin, that you're best of buddies and that you've got a great relationship, but it does appear that you're very quick to blame each other when you have these incidents. Do you both still believe that the other one is very much at fault or would you say that you should both share the responsibility for what's happened at the team recently?

KM: I think that in the heat of the moment, you know, you're always feel that you're in the right, and then you analyse things after you see it's probably more level and not as big a deal as it felt like on track. At the end of the day I don't think it's such a big deal, you know. We will try to do everything we can to not have these issues again. I think, as I said before, it became a very big issue when we both punctured in Silverstone. Apart from that, the end of the story is that we do respect each other and we want to do the best for the team and there have been laid out some guidelines for us now that we're going to respect and then just carry on.

RG: I think on the football pitch you don't have any microphone listening to what... even inside a football team between the team players they can say things, they're not happy with each other, and you're not saying that 'oh that team is having any issue', because I think in Formula 1 it's great that everything is broadcast but also it makes a story out of nothing. As I say, our relationship is good. When you're driving at 300kph obviously you're not going to say 'Oh, please, I think I was in my right, and he was in his wrong and would you mind giving me the position back, but I my only, please'. You're just going to say: 'F**k of, just give me the position.' Unless you want us you want us to be very, very boring, then I'll remove the microphone from the helmet, then I think it's always going to happen. Still it's false but that doesn't really matter, does it.

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) To Romain and Kevin again: how concerned are you both that this could be putting your future at the team at risk?

RG: Ah, let me answer the question differently. I was more worried last year than this year. Last year there were a lot of reasons that I could have ended up this year at home and I did many mistakes that I shouldn't have done with my experience. But I think since then I have recovered pretty well. I think everything we have been saying this year – the eye opener for the guys on reverting back to the old spec car, because I asked, shows that the experience is very important in Formula 1. Everything in the team has now changed. The focus is on the different parts and how we make sure we improve the car other than we just put upgrades without really knowing where we are. The races I'm happy with my performance. I think in qualifying I could have been better earlier in the year but now it's back to where it was. As I said, last year there were many reasons, to be frank, to stay home. This year I guess there are many less.

KM: Not worried at all.

Q: (Dániel Horváth – The Paddock magazine) There has been some talk about the possible return of refuelling into the sport. Do you think that's a good idea?

RG: If I may jump in for the GPDA on that one? I think if you guys agree... No? OK go ahead, save me doing what I say all the time! No, it was brought up by the GPDA because we have four key points that we want to improve to improve the show and those are tyres, aero sensitivity, weight of the car and money distribution. Robert came back into Formula One one or two years ago and said the cars felt really heavy and they are and the regulation makes it that they are getting heavier and heavier year after year and we don't have any solution with the current engine to bring the weight down. Therefore the idea of refuelling was brought in as a short term fix to help the tyres to not overheat that much and get better racing and better following in the car early in the race. It needs to be looked at but it's not that we want refuelling, it's that we need to find a solution to get the car lighter to be easy on the tyres and therefore having a better show.

RK: Copy paste.

DK: I think it's not just one simple thing that just needs to be changed and it's a magic switch and that's it and we will have amazing races every race. It's a combination of things that just need to be put together and strongly put together by one person who will say it will be done this way, obviously who will consider everyone's opinion. Refuelling doesn't seem a bad idea. I think we're looking at more general things like the aero of the car, tyres, how we follow each other, brakes, common parts. Say for example a radio ban wouldn't change anything on the racing or small things like if we do less switches on the steering wheel it would not change a lot, will not have a big impact on the racing itself. So I think all the points that were discussed in GPDA meetings and so on were all very good and we had a good agreement between drivers on which direction to move.

KM: On refuelling, I think it wouldn't only help on the weight issue, I think that shouldn't be the only thing about it because the cars need to be lighter anyway, refuelling or not. It would also make a bit more possibilities of strategy and a bit more variation in strategies rather than always a one-stop and so I can't see any negatives but if we do introduce it back then I hope that it's not an excuse to then

keep making the cars heavier because even though it comes back, it would help the weight issue in the race but they still need to not make them heavier.

LS: I think that there are other priorities at the moment that we need to think about to improve the racing. I don't think lighter cars will... is the main fix. I mean refuelling could be exciting in many ways, maybe not, maybe it won't change anything but I think that there's bigger things to focus on like aerodynamics, like Romain pointed most of them out: money distribution, just to make the series more competitive. Even if the cars maintain their current weight, with the much more competitive series will come much more exciting racing and that's where we need to be focused.

Q: (István Simon – Autó Magazin) Robert, according to the Hungarian Grand Prix organisers they are expecting some 35-40,000 supporters from Poland for this weekend, which is like one third of the whole capacity of the Hungaroring. Robert, could you please tell us what kind of motivation does this support give to you, not only for this race this weekend but since the beginning of your whole career which started here in 2006?

RK: Yeah, for sure it is kind of our home race, as Hungary is the closest race track to Poland and I think it's not a surprise that there will be a lot of Polish fans here, which is always nice. Of course I would like to pay them back for their support with a good performance but I think this will be quite difficult, looking at the season up to now. But still it's great to see such big support, not only in Formula One, they have been around also when I was rallying, when I was doing some other racing series so yeah, always good, and hopefully they will enjoy their weekend.

Q: (Tom Richtig – Sport TV) Romain, it's the middle of the season and the last race in Germany was also a difficult test for the new race director, Michael Masi. At least from our perspective, some great decisions such as wet standing start or his comments towards Lewis Hamilton spinning behind the safety car, what is your view as a director of GPDA on a more relaxed approach, maybe? Or what is the general feeling in regard to co-operation with Michael Masi's first half year?

RG: I think he stepped into big shoes – I don't know if you say that in English – but Charlie was a big part of Formula One for a very long time and replacing a role of Charlie was not easy. I believe he's done a good job. Personally I've been happy with what he's been doing. I think the standing start in Germany was a good idea. It's great to see the conditions and then when you think they are OK to go for it. I haven't seen his comments on Lewis spinning under the safety car. They were tricky conditions. We know the cars don't have a big operating window so when it's starting to rain and you're on slicks you are obviously not in the operating window. I spun just doing the switches on my steering wheel. I think everyone pretty much spun in that race at least once so I guess it was difficult but generally – I don't know what the others are thinking – but I think he does a good job and listens to us. He's well on board and (has) a new view on Formula One because he hasn't been here for a very long time and sometimes it's good to have new eyes on (it).

Q: Anybody else have anything to add on the job of Michael Masi? No? OK, next question.

Q: (Bart Van Dooijweert – nu.nl) Question to all drivers about the pit stop record last weekend set by Red Bull with 1.88s: can you tell me how much effort your team puts into a quick pit stop and do you think it's possible to do it even quicker than 1.88s?

LS: Yeah, that's very impressive and yes, that's something that the team puts a lot of focus on. It's a very important part of the race, important part of the strategy so we're always trying to go quicker. I have a lot of confidence that our guys can go quicker than that.

KM: Yeah, it's pretty impressive, I would say, 1.8s but what you really want is consistency and yeah, it's fine to have a 2.5s stop if you have it every time. But impressive.

DK: Yeah, I think they are consistently under two seconds now so it's impressive and incredible to see how the machine... I guess it's a combination of them together with machinery, how they work. It's great to see and for sure it's a lot of hard work but everyone in the paddock works hard to make those pit stops as fast as possible, I think, so it's impressive what levels they reach.

RG: Yeah, pretty much the same. I think it's a new reference in terms of every team is going to try to go as fast as they can and reach that level of performance, because obviously half a second in the pits can be a position on track and much more at the end of the race.

RK: Well, I think we are in good shape in that; already the second positive thing after engine power is our pit stops. If we would be judged by our pit stops we would be fighting with Red Bull for the championship but unfortunately they are fighting for winning races, we are ending up races lapped

most of the time, but it's a good thing. I think everyone is trying to balance – as Kevin said – performance against the risk. Actually our guys are doing it very fast quite regularly so it looks like that on this point we are pretty on it, so let's focus on the others.

Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.Net) Dany, you said after the race in Germany that you felt that you'd sent the message that you can fight at the front of the field on a more regular basis. If an opportunity were to arise with the senior Red Bull team next year, would you feel ready to return?

DK: I think this kind of thing is decided by the management of Red Bull so it's better to address these questions to them. At the moment I am driving for Toro Rosso but long term I want to be fighting for podiums and wins but right now the situation is that I am a Toro Rosso driver and the bigger decisions will be made by Red Bull management in the future.

Ends