



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## Press Information

### 2016 Russian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

28.04.2016

**DRIVERS – Felipe NASR (Sauber), Sergio PEREZ (Force India), Esteban GUTIERREZ (Haas), Jenson BUTTON (McLaren), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Daniil KVYAT (Red Bull Racing)**

#### PRESS CONFERENCE

**Daniil, I'll start with you, as it's your home race. Twenty-second birthday this week also. You were fifth on the grid here in 2014 and fifth in the race last year but Red Bull's performance in China must give you hope of improving on that this time out?**

**Daniil KVYAT:** Yeah, you know, lately we have been competitive on most of the tracks – doesn't really matter, any kind really, starting with Australia, Bahrain, China we always looked in quite good shape. I think Sochi also in the past for us maybe hasn't been the easiest track, as a team, but now we are just coming to any track and we are just trying to extract everything the car has got and I believe also here we can fight for quite strong points. We will do our best and I think the car is looking in great.

**Obviously you've had time now to look at the video from the last race, of that start. Are you happy enough with everything that went on, with your moves during that race, or at the start?**

**DK:** Yeah, I'm very happy actually. I think everything confirmed my point of view. I think obviously everyone told their opinions on that incident, also the people involved. I think all in all I did what any competitive racing driver would do. But now I think there has been enough talk about it. Now it's time to turn the page and move forward and now we are fully focused on the upcoming races.

**Thank you. Nico, if we could come to you. Three wins from three. Formula One love a statistic and there have been plenty bandied about concerning your start to season – best start since 2004 for Michael Schumacher. However, you're the one who has been sounding a note of caution through all that hyperbole. Lewis you're obviously expecting to bounce back, but how real a threat over these three races has Ferrari been. Have you seen any evidence of what they are capable of yet?**

**Nico ROSBERG:** I'm not really sounding any notes of caution, I'm just realistic and Ferrari, amongst others, just haven't shown what they can do yet. They've taken each other out in the last race, for example, in the first corner and from then it was just messy, an an example. A lot of things have been going wrong and for sure they are a lot quicker than they have shown and we think they are very, very close to us.

**Mika Hakkinen made some interesting comments earlier this week, I read, talking about your performance this season and what it takes to be a world class driver. I'll read them: he said the road is long and painful and it doesn't whether or not your father is a world champion or not, or**

**whether you have friends and family beside you, ultimate a driver is alone in the process. Is that a fair analysis?**

**NR:** I didn't know that.

**Is that how you see it. Is a driver alone in the position that you're in?**

**NR:** No. I'm not alone. I have our whole team. It's a team sport in the end; alone I can't achieve anything. Then the closer group, which is my family, friends, my management, physio and everything. Everything plays into it, everybody has their role and any success I have on the track they are a part of it.

**Does it feel like there is a mental burden upon you? Last year, as well, when you were going for a championship, and this year, is there a greater mental burden in that. Does it become very tough?**

**NR:** I generally see it as a very pleasurable experience! Because it's just an awesome feeling to come to a race track, to know that I have the car to be able to be on pole and win the race. I just look forward to it. So I'm here in Sochi and I can't wait to get going and see where we are compared to our direct rivals and try to make it happen.

**Thank you. Sergio, you're celebrating your 100<sup>th</sup> grand prix presence this weekend and also coming back to the scene of one of your most memorable podiums, last year. That obviously must give you a good feeling for the weekend?**

**Sergio PEREZ:** Yes, definitely. When I come back here and I remember my great race that I had last year, not that long ago actually. It was a great feeling, a great achievement to the team. And as you say my 100<sup>th</sup> race [weekend]. It has gone really quickly, I really hope I can have a great race on Sunday to have a full achievement, you know, because my 100<sup>th</sup> race, it's something very special as a driver to achieve and hopefully there's hundreds more to come.

**It hasn't been the easiest start to the season for you; there have been some incidents during the race that have maybe hampered your progress. Those race incidents – have you been happy with the team's reaction to those incidents during the race and the strategic decisions that have been made?**

**SP:** Obviously you always learn a lot after a race, after you have done the decisions. I think we have been affected a bit by strategy sometimes, the track position we've been having more than our pace. I think clearly in the last race we did a great race. I think we have improved quite a bit. But still we need a bit more especially in the race pace. I think our quali pace over one lap is good. We have to improve our degradation and I think we have found the issues with the car. I think it's just a question of time how quickly we can fix them. We are planning to have some upgrades for Barcelona. But I'm pretty confident it will be a good season for us, although right now we have zero points. We should have a couple of points already in the pocket, but the season is very long.

**Felipe, if we could come to you. There's been some talk in the run-up to this race about you getting a new chassis here. Can you give us the latest on that? Is it happening?**

**Felipe NASR:** Yes, I can confirm I do get a new chassis here. You have to remember that a Formula One car is made up of many components and it's just one part of it. I think it's a sensible step from the team that we are looking further to discover these problems, these handling issues I'm having in the car. Since we put the car on track in Australia we've been having this very strange behaviour let's say, it's very unpredictable to drive the car. As I said, I can confirm, it's a sensible step here and let's see how the weekend goes.

**Was there a definite problem with the chassis, the old one?**

**FN:** Not that they could identify. But as I said, there's so many places to look at. For this we need resources, we need time. The cars haven't been back at the factory. It was really good to have a full let's say look to every detail if we could, but I'm sure they are doing everything they can on the things we have in our hands now. It's a good step we take on this, ticking the box now and seeing if there's anything wrong with the chassis, and let's see how the weekend goes. It's been great here last year. I had one of my best races in Formula One. It's a track that I like, so at least I have this good reference in my mind.

**Esteban, we'll come to you. You've also had a couple of difficult races at the start of the season but you completed a race distance in China. How much of relief was that, how much of a weight off your shoulder?**

**Esteban GUTIERREZ:** For sure it was a relief to finish the race finally. It's been a frustrating start for me, a lot of interruptions over the weekends, but I wasn't satisfied completely just by finishing the race of course, I want much more than that. China overall wasn't a great track for our car. Hopefully we can recover from now on, in Russia, and that this track gives us better possibilities.

**Last week you said the year you spent out, doing a lot of work in the simulator, had give you the opportunity to develop a range of driving styles that you may not have used before. How has that informed your approach to driving the car you have now?**

**EG:** It didn't change the approach; it changed my knowledge. I basically experiment a lot. I used that time for it in the simulator, having different references. I made sure that that time, that year, was a benefit and not only a post time. I made sure of it and I really used everything, so I feel very confident and I feel very prepared right now and everything is in front of me.

**Great, thank you. Jenson, finally coming to you. Would it be fair to say that this season so far McLaren has slightly flattered to deceive? There has been good performance on Friday and Saturday you're on the cusp of Q3 but the races haven't quite gone according to plan. What's that down to, why are the races not panning out as you'd like to them to?**

**Jenson BUTTON:** Not doing a good enough job possibly. I think the last race, if you look at it – it's very difficult for a driver, because you come home 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> and it's not where you want to be – but if you look at it compared to last year, every car finished in China. So it's a big step forward to last year in China. In terms of where I think we are, yeah, our qualifying pace has been reasonable but I still don't think we have shown our true potential in qualifying either. We have been close to Q3. Circuits like this don't really help us either, but I think when we get back to Europe it should be easier to show our pace in qualifying and hopefully in the race. Yeah, it's moving forward but you always want more, you always want more. Formula One is so competitive right now. For us I feel that having something new coming every race, aerodynamically and also with the power unit, it's moving in the right direction, but we always want more. I think when we start scoring points on a regular basis we'll be a lot happier, but that hasn't happened.

**Honda have said the power unit is "nearly there". Is that a fair analysis, is that what your experience has been?**

**JB:** It's very difficult to know what 'nearly' means. I think we're very happy with the way the deployment is this year, compared to last year. We're a lot close to the other manufacturers, which is great. In terms of outright power, I don't know. I don't think anyone really knows, but we know there is still a lot of work to do and that's the aim.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Angelique Belokopytov – Auto Digest) You drive in Formula One since more than 15 years and that means you have driven a lot of cars. Which style of car do you prefer? Today more**

**complicated at a technical level or as you had in the past requiring more stylish driving or something like that?**

**JB:** I think it's a very easy answer. I think the drivers that were racing back in 2004 will say the V10s, lots of downforce, a tyre war – but this isn't where we are. We're not there right now. It's easy to look back and say the racing was better – and it probably was. And more fun to drive – but things have evolved and things have changed. Technology is a big thing with Formula One and manufacturers are very interested in Formula One because of the technology and I know that Honda is – so we're moving in a certain direction. I think Formula One can be as good as 2004 and hopefully that is soon.

**Q: (Andrey Kortasha - TASS News Agency) Question to Daniil Kvyat. How much is it important for you to finish ahead of your team-mate at your home grand prix? Is it important for you?**

**DK:** I think it would be logical to say that it is always important to finish in front of as many people as possible and, since your team-mate is one of those other drivers of course you try to do your best and finish in front of him. Of course, you know I've got quite a tough team-mate to beat. Very talented, very strong driver, very good reference since then. To beat him you have to do an absolutely perfect job in qualifying and in the race. And every time that happens I know it has been a really good day. Of course it's only three races this season so far and it hasn't been looking too bad. I think it can only get better as the season goes by. Let's see where the end of the season is going to be.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboSport.com) To all drivers. We had in the last race more than 150 overtakes and here we have just one pitstop predicted, considering the history of the grand prix. What scenario do you project for the weekend. Similar to the last one or something completely different: a more stable race let's say.**

**EG:** Well, I think it is a very different type of track. Russia offers... yeah, let's say a medium range of overtaking so it's not very straightforward but hopefully the strategy can be a bit more viable, that we can have more pitstops. As you say, the prediction is not the case, but hopefully we have a fun race for the people outside to watch, and have fun.

**Nico, is there much you can do on strategy at this race? It's been a regulation one-stop in the past.**

**NR:** Yeah, strategy-wise that's not going to make it as exciting probably as China, for example, in terms of overtaking. More straightforwards there. But, y'know, Turn One, for example, is still a good place to overtake on this track and we've seen some exciting stuff in past years. Not as much, of course, as China but some individual exciting moves so hopefully it will still be good. Let's see.

**Felipe, does the tyre choice you get now, will it make any difference here?**

**FN:** I think it's very straightforward as well. Looking back to last year, we got basically the same compound and I think it's the kind of track you can push pretty much every lap. I agree with Nico, it's not going to have as much excitement as it was in Shanghai but it's still a race. The time when to box, to know which tyres to start the race – sometimes a car is better on one compound, another is better on the other – so it's still playing to whatever tyre adapts better to which car and how you take it into the race. But from what I remember, last year was good that we could push throughout the whole race.

**Sergio, is it a good track for overtaking?**

**SP:** When you compare it to China, of course not because degradation, as Felipe says, is a lot lower here. It's not as high as China. But I think if we have a straightforward race we're going to see

different strategies. We have an extra compound, having the medium this year, it might create something towards the end of the race, something different, especially if you are having people on the medium and others on the supersoft, that's a two-step softer tyre so there might be the opportunity to overtake. I don't think we'll see as much overtaking as China but it will be an interesting race in terms of strategy. This characteristic of Pirelli bringing three compounds might create a little bit of different strategies and at the same time more excitement in the race. I think last year the race was very exciting – but given the conditions and what happened all through the race. I think if we have a straightforward race we might see a more interesting race than in the past years. I don't think we're going to see many cars on one stop this weekend.

**Jenson, your thoughts on it. Fernando did 40 laps I think on a supersoft last year. Is there much you can do? Is there any strategic variation?**

**JB:** None of us are muppets here, we know what the race is going to throw at us! It's not going to be like last year, with the time of the year and the circuit temperature, it's 20°C hotter than last year, so it's not going to be as easy to do a one stop, I don't think. It's going to mix it up, which is great. I don't think every race is going to be like Shanghai. I wish it was – but I don't think it will be. But still I think this race will be an interesting race.

**Dany, your thoughts on your home track. Red Bull have gone quite aggressive with tyre set choice here with ten supersofts for both you and Daniel**

**DK:** Yeah, I think obviously looking at last year, similar compounds to what it was last year and most of the people managed one stop I guess last year. Maybe it wouldn't be a bad track actually for the debut of the Ultrasoft, I don't know. But anyway, I think it is what it is, the same for everyone, and I still think the track offers some good opportunities for racing because there are long straights, so it can be quite exciting.

**Q: (Krill Zaytsev - 66.ru) Question for Daniil. Please tell us more about relationships with your team-mate and, one more question, do you have number one and number two pilot in your team or you are equal with Ricciardo?**

**DK:** I think it's a normal working relationship, we know each other for a while, we can share a joke outside the track like everyone, like normal, I guess like everyone. But once it comes to the work I think we're both focussed on our work because we're both professionals and we have plenty of things to do over the race weekend. Regarding your second question, it's not a very popular question to be honest. What defines Formula One is how fast you drive, how hard you work and then this brings you the result in the end. It's the only thing.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Nico, after six wins in a row, can we say that this is the best Nico ever and is it possible for you to describe when the spark ignited, maybe because of the birth of your daughter or maybe they changed the modifications on the car?**

**NR:** First of all yeah, I'm the most experienced Nico since I gained experience last year and the last two years from battling for the championship. Definitely I'm pleased with the way I've been driving now in the first three races. For me, it's not six in a row because the three last year were last year and they don't count for anything in this year's championship so for me it's winning the first three which I'm really happy about but as I said, it's because... yes, I've been driving really well but my opposition had a really messy start. That's the reality of it. I definitely expect them all to bounce back, especially Lewis and it's going to be a great battle against them as always and it will be tough, even if I have some points lead now but it's still such a long season: three races is a seventh or something of the whole thing. There's like 450 points to take still and now I have 30-something in front or whatever. There's still a massively long way to go so it's not really changing the situation much.

**Q: (Andrea Cremonesi – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Kvyat, I would like to know how different this car is to last year's that allows you to do better performances? What is the strongest part of the car this year?**

**DK:** I think generally at the end of last year I think our car was behaving itself pretty well. Over the winter there hasn't been any revolution, let's say, in terms of the car. There were just a few 'tidies up' here and there on the chassis side. I think also the engine side also improved, there was a step forward and it was very pleasing to see and hopefully there will be another step forward coming at some point soon when we will be able to give a bigger fight to the competitors which are still ahead of us. It would be very nice, especially in the last year we have been able to develop through the season quite nicely and I think that if we will have a similar rate of improvement we will become hopefully a headache for some people.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) We are reaching a moment where we are seeing nice races this year but everything will change dramatically for next season. There will be a more downforce in the cars, wider tyres and everything. This solution, from the drivers' point of view, is the solution to make the show even better, to see more competition, to attract the public more?**

**NR:** Our opinion was that it's not the right direction to go and we were hoping that they would definitely re-look into it and just make sure from a technical point of view to double check. Now this is the way it is, so now all we can do is accept it and make the most of it and hope that there are going to be some surprises. Maybe we're going to love the cars and enjoy driving them even more than we are now. Maybe all the grip is going to feel great or whatever. Now it's just accept it and make the most of it.

**Q: Jenson, was it worth waiting for some degree of convergence?**

**JB:** I concur.

**DK:** Well, I'm not completely clear where we're going to head but maybe it's going to make it interesting because obviously for 2014 the regulations, everyone knew quite well in advance how the regulations were going to be, so some people could be better prepared for it, but now I think, as time to prepare is a bit limited, I think everyone might start in a very similar condition, which could lead to closer racing perhaps. All the teams might be much closer and yeah, I think downforce, generated in the right way and mechanical grip from the tyres could be an interesting combination, also for racing, for us drivers to really reach some incredible speeds would really be quite cool.

**Q: Sergio, is it a case that you accept what regulations are given to you? Do you drive the car that you're given?**

**SP:** Yeah, I meant there's nothing else you can do. I really hope that the sport goes in the right direction, that we can see more competition, closer teams as we've seen in the past. We've seen big gaps between the teams in the past. I really hope that we can have a much closer field and that the regulations and the direction we're going in cannot create those sort of gaps, that we can close up the gaps. In my opinion it's what Formula One needs, it needs more competition rather than more downforce, it needs more competition across the teams.

**Q: Esteban, is this regulation change something that could disadvantage a team like Haas, just coming in at the point it has come in?**

**EG:** Not disadvantage. My opinion is that the changes of having wider cars, wider tyres is the right one because what we need is to increase the mechanical grip of the cars. In my opinion that will give us a better feeling when we are driving on the limit. What I'm not fully convinced about is obviously the increase in downforce which will naturally make overtaking more difficult or let's say following a car more difficult. The changes are there so as a driver, we don't have an option, we just make the best of it. I think the cars will look spectacular so from that side of things it's positive.

**Q: Felie, is it important to have a change like this in order to improve the show or did it need improving?**

**FN:** Well, I guess it is. I do believe changes can always bring different kinds of mixes and surprises, depending on how teams face it but all I can say is that in a team like Sauber at the moment it's difficult for them in the actual situation they are facing plus to have such a change to face next year is complicated. You need to have the right resources and time, fighting against other things that they are facing now, so it is difficult but on the other hand, I think that from a driver's point of view, I think the mechanical grip will be such a good thing for us drivers to have it back, as I think we are all pretty much leaning in that... trying to get this back in the car but I agree with the others, what they are saying about the downforce, is it exactly what is going to improve the show? We don't know but let's hope for the best. Everybody's here to try and do the best with what we have and what we can do as drivers but I think that's pretty much it.

**Q: (Angelique Belokopytov – AutoDigest) For all of you; Nico you were just saying that we just have to accept and do the best with it. Do you all agree with the fact that you have no word to say about what you're doing on the track? You are making the race so why not have a part of the decision-making?**

**NR:** Actually we've been trying to get more involved and actually it's moving in the right direction because the FIA is asking us more things now. They want to hear our opinion, asking us for get-togethers and so the process is going well, I think, and with time, let's see where it goes. We will try to be more and more involved because I think we can really give something additional to the direction of the sport, because we know a lot of things about what should be good for the sport, because we're driving the cars in the end.

**Q: Jenson, you concur again?**

**JB:** Yes.

**SP:** I share the view of Nico.

**Q: What I did wanted to ask was: drivers, the input that you have, when you're driving the car, do you really know what is the best for the sport from the outside, because a driver will always want what's best for a driver but can you make that valued judgement on what occurs?**

**JB:** You could say that for anyone that makes a decision, couldn't you?

**NR:** What I meant was we love the sport, all of us and I don't say that we're just going to say what we think is best for us driving in the car. We do think beyond that and think about everybody who's in front of a TV screen, supporting us and excited about this sport. That's what we're think about and we think that as a group we are wise enough to definitely give some added value for the future direction.

Ends