



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2016 Grand Prix of Europe Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Carlos SAINZ (Toro Rosso), Nico HULKENBERG (Force India), Rio HARYANTO (Manor), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Fernando ALONSO (McLaren), Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Fernando, you were here earlier in the race in your capacity as an ambassador for this race. How much has changed since then?

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, a few things have changed then. Obviously the circuit now is ready and all the garage, the pit lane, the grandstands and also the weather! It was quite cold in March and I remember to have two jackets walking on the circuit and now it's quite hot, windy and the race will be different on that aspect. But I think the job they have done is fantastic. Everything is ready. Also the fans are well into F1 and they are very prepared, very enthusiastic for the race on Sunday and everything is ready for a good show.

In terms of the layout, which bit looks most interesting?

FA: A few things that we need to discover in the car. Obviously walking is always different, in the simulator it's different, so let's see. Turn 8, 9 and 10, the narrow section on the uphill will be quite interesting to drive there and see how we can maximise the car limits there. The very unique theme on this circuit is probably the straight-line speed, which will be very high, and to be on a street circuit those kind of speeds will be quite unique. We need to check if it's really flat out from Turn 16 to Turn 1 or if Turn 19 and 20 you need make a lift there. Anyway, it's quite interesting and will be for some teams a little bit more painful, probably for us, in terms of the distance on the straight. I should have made some modifications when I came here in March to make it a little bit slower, but that's the way it is and we will see.

Thank you Fernando. Valtteri, if we could come on to you. Montreal marked your first podium of the year. How much of a sense of relief was there in the Williams team?

Valtteri BOTTAS: It definitely makes a difference to the team, having a good race by the team, with the strategy and pit stop and everything, it was a good weekend, especially Sunday was a very strong performance by us. It always does give a lot of confidence to every single guy in the race team but also at the factory to push even harder. So yeah it is overall a good positive feeling in the team. We know we can do good results, so it's nice to continue from here.

Was that result track specific or are we witnessing the start of a mid-season resurgence from Williams?

VB: Montreal definitely was one of the good tracks for our car, really its within the strengths of the car, but there are still plenty of good races to come. I don't think this is going to be too bad for us

and also the next three races after. I'm pretty sure we can still, with a good weekend, if we keep developing the car, we can fight for the podium and that should be the goal for us as a team.

Thank you. Rio, if we come to you. You've been making steady progress this year. You've outqualified your highly-rate team-mate three times. Are you feeling comfortable in the car now? Just give us a resume of how you feel it's gone so far in 2016?

Rio HARYANTO: Yes, I have been progress every time, each race. It feels great to be able to be fighting quite close between the team-mates but our goal is still quite a long way, we wanted to really improve and to get the best results we can for the team.

Just give us a word on how things are back home in Indonesia, the popularity of Formula One there and how it's growing?

RH: I think it's been really good. The popularity has kept increasing and I believe that as they have broadcast the Formula One races on the national channel the popularity is increasing and I think it's good for Formula One.

Thank you. Nico, points finishes at the last two races in Monaco and Montreal. Can we expect to see you continue that rich vein of form here in Baku?

Nico HULKENBERG: Yeah, I hope so. Obviously it's a new venue: no data, no knowledge, no previous laps here, so everybody starts from scratch pretty much, which could be interesting. Obviously the track looks quite exciting, as we've all seen now. I think we've made a massive step since Barcelona with the car. The upgrade there really made a big change to our game. Since then we've really been a points scoring contender on every track, so I feel confident that we can keep it up, yeah.

You say everybody starts from scratch. Just give us a few words on how a driver prepares for a new race like this. Is there much correlation between the simulator and how much will you be relying on those opening laps tomorrow?

NH: I think it's different from team to team. Some teams have a simulator, they have the track already, we don't, so for us it's really going to be starting from scratch, those opening laps are going to be very crucial and important – discovering the track, finding the limit, getting the lines etc. Correlation of simulator, sometimes it's really good, sometimes not so good. I guess at the end we all have to come here, do the real thing, learn and work from there.

Thanks. Carlos, coming to you, 20th to ninth last weekend in Canada, how satisfying was that result?

Carlos SAINZ: It was very satisfying, especially after the disappointment on Saturday, as you can imagine. To manage to recover well and come back from 20th to ninth was an achievement not only for me but also for the team. We had a bit of a scrappy Sunday in Monaco with some issues on the pit box and all that side and we managed to arrive to Canada and we managed to put on a very good race from the back, with perfect strategy, perfect pit stops and it was a also relief in those terms. Yeah, to manage to split the two Force Indias coming from all the way back was a huge achievement and now we need to keep working, because we need to keep this up and keep going for it.

How difficult is it going to be to keep it up, because other teams are getting a lot of engine upgrades at the minute? How do you rate the competitiveness of the Toro Rosso now with the year-old Ferrari engine?

CS: It's going to be tough. Already you know... you put an example, in Australia we managed to qualify P5 and P7 and now in places like Canada or Azerbaijan we will struggle to get into Q3, so for sure we are going a bit backwards. We haven't put that many upgrades on the car since

Australia, but thanks to the good effort of the team we are not that much falling back, no? And we are still in the game, we are still fighting for P5 in the Constructors', with the same car as in Australia, which is a huge achievement, even though you take into account how many upgrades Force India and McLaren are bringing and we are still there trying to hold on.

OK, thank you. Sebastian, thank you for waiting, on to you. Now, this is a coastal location, there is probably going to be a lot of seagulls around, so how do you think that is going to affect your race?

Sebastian VETTEL: Well, technically I think it's a lake; it's not a sea. I think I read some... before I knew we would be coming here, I read some years ago that it is the biggest lake in the world. So I shouldn't be afraid of any seagulls. There will be some, but hopefully they won't sit in front of the car.

Canada was Ferrari's most competitive showing of the season. Is that the pace that you have been threatening to do all season or did the upgrades make the difference?

SV: For sure, upgrades help. I think everything we brought to Canada – there was a lot of talk about the turbo update – did make a difference, so that was good. But I think it was just a clean weekend in particular, because the weekends before were a bit messy, in particular in qualifying we weren't able to show the pace or release the pace of the car, so in this regard Saturday was strong. I think we qualified where the car belongs and on Sunday we had a trouble-free race. Obviously we were able to put Lewis under a lot of pressure, because simply the speed was. I think you just seem to a nicer and easier Sunday where you can do your thing if Saturday goes well and this has to remain the target. As for here, as we've been through, it's a completely new track, but it looks very, very exciting, so I'm very much looking forward to it.

Would you say that Canada was Ferrari's cleanest weekend of the year so far?

SV: Well, certainly for me it was. I think it's also a track where last year we have been fairly competitive. It's probably right to say the characteristics suit us, but I think we should be strong everywhere to be honest, so yeah, the weekends before weren't entirely clean.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – Motorsport-total.com) I realise that this is a hypothetical question but if you put all the drivers in the same car on an average track like Barcelona, what do you think would be the difference between the fast and slowest driver? And Sebastian, after Canada, did you have an offer from the World Wildlife Fund or PETA or similar organisations?

SV: No. I start on the first question. I don't think it would be much, a lot less than what we see now, we know that. I think Formula One has always been like that. I don't know, to give you an idea, I'd probably say half a second.

Would you agree with that Fernando? If you were all in the same car – half a second?

FA: Very difficult question, I don't know... maybe.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, how would you rank this latest podium of yours compared to the eight previous ones and how much that meant for you personally?

VB: I actually think, yeah, that must have been one of my best ones, because it was one of my best races. I think that was the feeling after the race. I managed to get that long stint to work, with consistent lap times, and you just do feel as a driver when you do a good race compared to some of the other races and I had this feeling after. But it's difficult to say exactly which one is the best, but of course I'm not too pleased because I want to win races. I'm not 100% satisfied with being

third. That's always the goal. But, of course, it's been a difficult season for us so that's a good result for everyone, for me, but we definitely want more.

Q: (Joe Saward – Auto X) Just a question about this circuit: it's very, very fast, did the drivers get any input on the design? Because Turn Three, for example, you're going in there at very high speed and there's about 50m of run-off area. Do you have any thoughts about the circuit, or were you involved at all?

FA: No, obviously we don't get involved in any of the layout or any of the decisions but, yeah, there are some corners that probably we will talk about. Some others that we need to go on the car first and see how they feel. We saw Singapore also making some small modifications to some corners year after year until we find a good compromise. I guess it's going to be quite similar here. I think next year maybe some tweaks can be done after we go in the car. But yeah, in terms of safety I think FIA, y'know, ran many simulations in terms of how to make the run-off area safe enough. Obviously some of them are more than enough, some of them, maybe they look small but it's always better than Monaco, for example. It cannot be any worse than that.

Does anyone have anything else to add. Nico?

NH: No, perfect answer.

Q: (Oana Popoiou - Fanzone) Rio, could you tell us how much a driver can learn while racing for a team that struggles in terms of performances?

RH: I think as a rookie you can certainly learn a lot on your first year with a team like Manor. I think this year they have made huge progress, a huge step compared to last year and certainly in some occasions we've been able to race with some other teams as well, like Sauber and Renault – so I don't think it's a bad thing.

Q: (Carlos Miguel – Autohebdosport) A question for Fernando and for Carlos. Question is very simply: who will be the first Spanish driver in the table at the end of the championship?

CS: Hopefully me! I don't know. It looks tough because Honda keeps bringing upgrades, McLaren keep improving and improving so we will not know where they will end up at the end of the year. But obviously I will try to do my best to keep it up there. I think now we are equal? More or less same points. If we've been ahead for seven races and he's still fighting with us – it means it could be a good fight from now on until the end of the year.

Fernando, will you be ahead?

FA: We'll see obviously. I would be happy if Carlos is ahead this year and I'm able to fight for the championship next one. It's not a huge satisfaction to finish ninth or tenth or whatever. Definitely I will be in front of Carlos at the end of the year anyway! I miss two races this year and we are equal so...

Q: (Ben Edwards – Channel 4) Question for Sebastian and Fernando: any concerns about the pit entry here because it looks as though it's a pretty fast approach and then it's a chicane before you get to the speed limit. Any concerns about that?

SV: No, actually I don't understand why this has been the second type of question of the same nature. I walked the track and I was looking on the track, not so much on the runoffs. I think it looks exciting. I'm thrilled to get in the car tomorrow and excited to get out and get a feel. Pit entry looks a challenge – but then again I think that's why we're here. And, as I say, I certainly have the plan to stay on track and not use the run-off or the off-track.

FA: Same. Let's see in the car, how it is. Similar to Brazil a couple of years ago maybe, and some other pit entries. It was no problem.

Q: (Silvia Arias – Parabrisas) I would like to know, from all of you, in normal conditions in a new track how many laps do you need in a new track to find the limit?

VB: Well, to find the absolute limit you won't be able to build up all those small details until the qualifying really. Normally in qualifying you manage to do the best lap of the weekend – but you get very close to that very quickly, I think, with all the preparation we can do nowadays: simulator etc., In Practice One you already have, after the first run, second run you are already very close to the optimal lap time you can do in those kind of conditions. It's not that long.

Nico, you don't have access to a simulator. How long until you'll be exploring the limits tomorrow?

NH: I don't know. At a guess after ten laps you have a really good idea of the track. You have it in your mind by then. You know what's coming. From there onwards it's work-in-progress really. You keep finding little bits here and there. The track will progress as well: there will be more rubber so it will keep moving on and go faster and faster, so you just have to go with that. But, I think, to give you a number, ten laps and you're at a pretty good level.

Fernando. Ten laps for you as well?

FA: Two!

SV: I do it in one and a half!

Q: (Livio Oricchio – globoesporte.com) To all drivers. From the exit of bend 12 to the braking of 15 you have bend number 13 & 14 in the middle. Looks like flat-out all the time and wall both sides: like oval in principle but in a straight circuit. Would you comment on that please?

CS: From the laps I did on the simulator, looks like it could well be flat with some good walls waiting for you. Maybe behind a car with a bit less downforce it becomes more tricky. But the interesting part, I think, comes after those two flat-out corners. That is a good downhill that you brake and turn that is, again, not much run-off area so I remember the simulator being quite tricky there and hopefully it stays the same tomorrow and is a challenging corner. The more challenges at the end you face, the more exciting it is for the driver, the more open to mistakes also for the driver, and maybe the more exciting qualis and races that we have. Looks definitely an interesting point on the track.

Sebastian?

SV: Well, again, I'm trying to look at what's coming rather than what I pass. I think the whole part there looks very exciting, starting from Turn Eight. Basically going around the old town. It's nice to see, when I walk the track, it's quite some gradient. It goes up, there should be a blind apex around 10-11, which is a big challenge and then obviously those two corners you mentioned at fairly high speed. In terms of safety standards, I think they've done everything they could. I'm a lot happier to have the wall that close to the track rather than have a run-off and then some tyres or something waiting for you. Plus there's a safer wall which is working well, also in tracks like Brazil. I think in that regard should be fine. And the whole bit leading around the old part of the city looks quite spectacular. Hopefully it feels like that as well.

Q: (Jose Carlos Carabias - Journal ABC) Question for Fernando. In this moment of the season do you believe in your car or are you thinking in the next year?

FA: I think a little bit of both. Obviously we want to be fighting for the World Championship. We are not in that position this year and we are making, I think, progress and we are moving in the right direction to achieve that goal in the future but still a long way to go for us. Definitely we need to think on next year's car, next year's project and put some focus on there and try to be more

competitive next year. At the same time we cannot forget 2016 yet because we are only in June, many races to come, many good possibility to score points, to go a little bit higher on the Constructors' Championship that will help the team also for next year. And some of the progress and updates we can bring this year will be quite useful for next year as well. Especially on the power unit side. That doesn't change so much in the regulations. So, still working on both projects and still very motivated to score many points this year and to do a good season.

Q: (Alex Popov – Match TV) This is to all drivers about the ultrasofts, because we used it for two consecutive races, Monaco and Montreal, so how much did you rate it and will you miss these tyres here?

NH: It's difficult to say without having done a lap here but personally I'm always a fan of the softer compound because they simply give you more grip, especially on one lap in qualifying, so it's more fun, naturally. I think they performed quite well in Monaco and Montreal. Here we just have to work with what we're given but we know it's not here.

VB: Not a lot to add really. Of course it gives you more grip which is nice but on the other hand it wears more and it's completely unknown if it would be any use here. I doubt it a little bit, because of the track temperature. It's difficult to say.

SV: Well, I think it was working fine, the grip is high, the principal problem that we had in the last Grands Prix to be fair was that it was cooler than we all expected. We raced in Monaco, it was wet and it was only just shy of 20 degrees ambient. We raced in Canada, it was quite cool, again, so I think the tyre will work better when it's hotter. I think that's what it's made for. Here it should be hot, it shouldn't be wet but given that it's the first year, the first race here, it's unknown how the track is and how the stress on the tyres will be, I think you can understand the choice. For sure, as a driver, the softer the tyres, the quicker you go, the more fun you have so in this regard maybe we miss it but it should be fine with the tyres we have.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – globoEsporte.com) We have a uncommon situation of a straight of 2000 meters. I would like to hear your comment about that, concerning the brake temperature, the tyres and mainly the DRS that you're going to use in the middle of the straight.

FA: Well, I think all the circuits have their own unique features and this one will be the longest straight in the calendar, the longest straight on any circuit in the world, so that will be challenging in terms of set-up of the car and making your preference in terms of downforce and the settings so that will be a good thing, I think, for F1 and yeah, I don't have any concerns about brakes or anything like that, so I think it's OK. Definitely Monaco is Monaco, a very unique circuit and a very unique event. Singapore: racing at night and all the things that are unique there. Valencia was a little bit of a unique circuit and with unique features and here in Baku it's a similar thing. All the street circuits have one thing and the long straight will be this one, I think we will talk about it with Baku.

VB: I don't think it's too bad for us, that kind of straight but of course we need to see. Of course, this track with that long straight it makes it more difficult because for that straight we probably need to run a little bit less downforce so it means that you're maybe struggling slightly more in the corners but you need to find a good compromise and I'm sure that's what everyone is going to focus on quite a lot in practice, to find the right set-up in terms of aero.

Q: Carlos, with that year-old Ferrari power unit, are you going to have to trim the car quite heavily down this long straight?

CS: I don't know, maybe we need to take off the rear wing! It could be a challenge for us, for sure. We will be working a lot on the set-up to try to find a good compromise but you know in Canada we were expecting to be weak and we were not at all weak, we actually had really good pace in the race, so it doesn't mean that because of that long straight here we cannot compensate with our good car, our good package and be strong. Obviously we are not going to be as fast as in

Monaco or Barcelona for sure but hopefully we can still fight the teams that we are fighting now - Force India, McLaren - for those top ten positions.

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Question to Seb and Fernando as the most experienced guys here and especially Fernando as an ambassador. I know this is likely to be a slightly unpopular question because you're here to compete, first and foremost, but the race does take place against the wider backdrop and several respected organisations have been critical of the human rights situation here in Baku. Unlike in Bahrain, I don't think anyone's calling for a boycott or anything like that, they just ask leading figures in the sport to offer their views on the situation and whether they would ever criticise the regime here. I just wonder if that's anything that even enters your head before a race or if that's something you would ever get involved in? Did you think about politics at all before you agreed to be an ambassador for the race here?

FA: Well, I think we completely rely on the FIA in terms of the places and the venues we race. On that aspect – at least in my case – I think we never think any further than that. I totally put all my trust and my confidence on the federation and on the decisions that they make. If we are racing here it's because everything was good for them and so it's good for us. We are promoting the sport around the world and we are promoting the values of the sport around the world and that will always be welcome in any country.

SV: Well said, nothing to add.

Q: (Joe Saward – AutoX) Just to ask each one of you, how many simulated laps have you done of this track so we get an idea of who's done what?

RH: Well yes, I think firstly it's good for track familiarisation and secondly again, we don't know much what to expect but it's good to have a rough idea of the long straights and the corners.

Q: (Joe Saward – AutoX) Just a number, number of laps?

RH: About 80 laps.

NH: (Indicates none)

CS: Good question, around 80, 100, it's quite a long track so you cannot do many.

VB: I don't know the exact number but I think more than a race distance, plus a couple of laps running.

FA: I didn't make any, zero.

SV: One this morning and in the simulator, between 50 and 100, I don't remember. Maybe 70, something like that.

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – Motorsport Total.com) Obviously this weekend Le Mans is going on, the 24 hour race and this is a question to Fernando and Nico in particular. Are you going to follow the race and if so, do you have any favourites as to who is going to win it?

NH: You ask if I have a favourite or not? Obviously I'm supporting Porsche and my guys from last year. I'll be quite busy here but I'll follow it as much as I can and tune in or watch the live ticker and try to follow it a little bit.

FA: Yeah, same, perfect answer!

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Seb, people talk about winning teams, like Mercedes, they get in the groove, they get used to different situations arising and conversely, people talk about a team forgetting how to win. Do you think there's any merit in that argument whatsoever, people saying that because Ferrari haven't been winning ten races a year for the last five years they become a bit less agile in dealing with situations at the front?

SV: Well, I don't know about other teams but I disagree when it comes to us. Obviously I joined the team last year and I think it's a very strong team and I think in the end the mentality is responsible for the fact whether you win or not. Ultimately, obviously, every day you can choose one hundred different reasons. First of all, if you're competitive enough or not, usually that's one

of the main reasons but in terms of mentality, I see a team full of winning people. I think there's definitely the desire to win from everyone involved. This is also one of the things that makes me very confident that we will start winning sooner or later. Of course the ambition for anyone involved is always to win, some achieve it and some don't and there are reasons for that, as I said. If you look at the cars' performance etc which will help you or not but I think what really makes you a winner is not just the fact that you have a car that's quick enough, it's the people that operate the car ultimately and in this regard I think we're a very very strong team. We can be stronger, so there's stuff that we can learn and will always have to learn but I haven't seen a winner yet – a winning team or a winning person – that has learned all the lessons in life or everything there is to learn and in this regard we're complete. I think naturally if you look at our sport, the way it's changing, evolving etc, there's always things that you can learn as a team. There's definitely things you can learn as a driver, how to drive the car so yeah, I think this never stops but I think it's the mentality that is most responsible for whether you make it or not.

Ends