



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L' AUTOMOBILE

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United States Grand Prix

Saturday Post-Qualifying Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS

1 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

2 – Sebastian VETTEL (Ferrari)

3 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

Cowboy Lewis, and you rode that car beautifully around there and you even left a couple of '11s' on the lap coming down out of Turn 1. The first sector wasn't perfect but the lap was good enough to beat everybody today?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, the team have done a great job. The track was very difficult today, guys. With the wind picking up, you've got a headwind into Turn 1, a tailwind out of Turn1. Through the fast section, sector one, there's tailwind and then you've got a headwind into Turn 9 and so it's shifting the whole way through the lap, so you're kind of gauging how hard you can push and how hard you have to let off. But that's why I love this track, man. It's such a fantastic circuit to drive, I love it, especially when you have a car you can really drive, it's great.

And the heat as well, on those open parts of the circuit, it is so intense.

LH: I mean, it's always hot in the car. I think it's just the right temperature today. It's not too hot, the sun's out, we can at least enjoy it, I mean the guys out here are not getting a sun tan but still... It's going to be a great race tomorrow, it's going to be a tough one, because looking after the tyres in these conditions is still tough but I'm the best prepared I can be.

Sebastian, you needed this front row, man, didn't you, to take this championship fight, to keep the pressure on him, to keep the heat on him. How much did you have to draw out of yourself for that lap, because it was a brilliant lap?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, I was very happy in the end, but I was lacking a bit the rhythm, especially the transition of the first to second sector, it was quite tricky with the wind, so I struggled a bit there. But finally I got it right, in the last run, when it mattered. As you said, important obviously to get front row, because I believe our race pace is really good. I quali all year we've been just a little bit behind, so well done to Lewis, obviously, he did two great laps and yeah, looking forward to tomorrow now.

All the talk this week has been about what Lewis needs to do to win the title this weekend. What you need to do is win this race, do you think you can?

SV: Not just here, it would be good to win also the others. But we go day by day. We were lacking a bit of running yesterday. Today was a lot better. I was getting up to speed and it was there when it mattered, but the race is tomorrow. It's a great track, a great place, a lot of people, so it should be a good day tomorrow.

And a big run up to Turn 1 as well. Well done, many congratulations. Valtteri, not quite the front row today. I guess a little bit disappointed but the pace is there, the car looks great, how confident are you feeling for the race?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Definitely disappointing, you know. It was looking good for us and quite close with Lewis as well at some points, so disappointing, but there is always tomorrow.

Well done. Lewis, back to you. Nick is here this weekend, adoring fans in the grandstand, which is pretty much your second home here in the States. I know how much you love it, you wrapped up your third title here, is it going to be four tomorrow?

LH: I think it's highly unlikely that will be the case. Sebastian did a great job today to bring the Ferrari back up there. Ultimately all I can do is the best I can of my abilities and we have to work as hard as we can to get maximum points. Sebastian is right there, so unless he makes a silly mistake, which is unlikely, he's a four-time world champion, then we're going to be seeing it continue on to other races.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Lewis, how good was that opening lap [of Q3], the one that followed and generally how are you feeling?

LH: I feel fantastic. I feel very fresh and happy and naturally always wish that qualifying would go longer because it's the most fun session of the weekend. In general, very happy with all of qualifying. The last was not spectacular but up until then generally very, very strong. The team have done an exceptional job all weekend in filtering all of the data that we've got to really put the car in the right place and enable me, again, have the opportunity to exploit that. This is such a fantastic circuit, because just the layout and the way the wind comes and intertwines with the corners, it really makes it challenging, you know, so when you are going through the 'Esses' it's not all the same through them, then you come out and you've got a headwind and then a crosswind and then you've got a headwind and a tailwind. So you're constantly dancing with the wind. That I do love. On the last lap, I got caught out by a bit of a gust but that's how it goes but yeah really happy to be up here, especially in front of such a great crowd.

And you had a low 1m33s on that first run, when you went out for that final run did you think that with a perfect lap it might be possible to get a high 1m32s or was that too much to hope for?

LH: It never even crossed my mind! I don't even know what time I did if I'm really honest! What was it?

I think it was a 33.2 or something like that.

LH: I think I was up on that last one. I think on a perfect lap I could get down into the 32s but it's very hard out there in those conditions.

Very well done, great job. Sebastian from your point of view it's a story of recovery really. We saw your old chassis being wheeled out yesterday, a new chassis being built up overnight. Tell us about that process, how you got back into it, and how you feel to be able to split the Mercedes?

SV: I think we are very happy with the result. It was obviously crucial to get that final run. Bit of a slow start. We had a couple of problems, I didn't feel comfortable yesterday with the car, and we did hardly any laps. Obviously I lost the car very early in FP2, which didn't help and I thought that there's something not right. Obviously a big job overnight. The team was fantastic, the mechanics now had a couple of weekends in a row with a lot of work, with last-minute engine changes, now a chassis change overnight and they didn't break the curfew. You know you're allowed to use a certain time before everybody has to leave the garages and if you do that big job there is always a threat but I think they did another record time to change. Obviously it's not what we want, but obviously today was a lot better, I was much happier with the car. I'm glad it worked out. And not finding the rhythm straight away in quali, I struggled a bit in a couple of corners but I knew if I get them right I should be able to make a big step in the final run, so I was very happy. I think in the end we were closer than probably we even expected so for today, but for tomorrow I think if the car behaves like today it should be good.

Valtteri, conditions this weekend for this session the hottest of the weekend so far, how did the car feel and what are you expecting from the race?

VB: Well, as Lewis said it was quite a tricky session with the wind and every lap was always a little bit different. We have been making quite big set-up changes in the weekend and definitely made the car quicker but quite tricky car for me to drive at least. I just struggled really with the pace and the laps they felt good, I just couldn't go quicker. Lewis did a good job again.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Lewis, you are the fastest guy all weekend. Do you think in race conditions you can keep also. In Malaysia you said you had doubts in the race, is it the same case here. And to Valtteri, you did an incredible first sector, in the strongest points of Lewis in this circuit, but then the lap was not so fast as the first part, why?

LH: We know we're often good through practice and qualifying but then the races are always a tricky one for us in terms of balance. We're not terrible but you would think that we're generally stronger in qualifying than we are in race, that's been the case all year. But I think we're good. I think I've got a good set of tyres, I think I've got a good balance for tomorrow. I'm looking forward to a good race with Sebastian and Valtteri. This is a track where you can follow a lot closer and even overtake as that race me and Sebastian had back in 2012 here, which was great, but I don't plan on him getting that close but we shall see. But I think we will be OK tomorrow.

VB: I didn't understand the question.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) I said you did a fantastic first part of the lap, you were the fastest guy at that moment, but then the rest of the lap was not so good.

VB: In Q3. Yeah, I couldn't improve in the second run. The first run felt OK, but Lewis managed to gain somehow more from Q2 to Q3 and I couldn't really. I couldn't find any track improvement. Like I said it was not easy sessions, every lap was a bit different but there were no big mistakes, just small things here and there as I feel for all the drivers but there was just this big gap.

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport-Magazin.com) Question for Sebastian. Would you compare the situation you had today in Q3 in the last lap with the one you had in Japan where you saw the gap was quite to the front runners? Or was it completely the opposite – because you knew he had to be a bit more on the safe side to get these two corners right. And which two corners was it?

SV: Well, I struggled a bit into Turn Eight, so Eight-Nine then it's a succession up the hill. Obviously, the wind was quite tricky all day really. In the morning, I thought it was fine. In the afternoon, I just started on the wrong foot. It wasn't really a question of stepping down, or calming down. It was more a question of getting it right. The shots that I had before, I obviously tried. Maybe I did take a little bit more risk but it never really worked – and then yeah, I knew what I had to get right, so I got it right. That was the most important but obviously in Japan I was fairly comfortable, let's say, front row, no matter what Valtteri was going to do, so I decided to take a bit more risk but it was very different here, obviously. My lap was very poor in Q3 and I knew that I had to deliver otherwise I would have been, I don't know, not even top six maybe. Therefore the timing was just right.

Q: (Jeff Gluck – Jeffgluck.com) Lewis, how has your relationship with the American fans evolved over the years? It seems like you've soaked up the relationship with the American fans and the adoration that they have for you. How has that evolved for you over the years here?

LH: Yeah, I think it's been an interesting journey for me. I think it's... my love of America started many, many years before I even came to the States, watching movies and seeing these great cities, like New York and all over. My Mum actually saved up to bring me to New York for my 17th birthday and we had an amazing few days. It kind of grew from then. And obviously coming here, racing here, my first... my second grand prix win but first race in the US was Indy and that was an amazing feeling. A great battle that I had with Fernando, and then obviously moving here. I don't know why it's always gone so well for me here but there definitely is a... I do feel a lot of positivity here. It is such a great country, it's got so much to offer. Obviously, you've got great mountains, great countryside, great seaside, great food. There's not really anything it doesn't have.

Plus you've got NASA here, which is pretty awesome. Rocket! I like that. So yeah, and I generally feel like, obviously... naturally I think people, Americans really do relate to... they're crazy into their sports, they relate to winners, and obviously the fact I've had the success that I've had here I think comes hand-in-hand with that relationship but I really do appreciate the support that I have here and it does feel like a second home for me. It's a place that I try to spend as much time as I can in my off-time 'cos it's where I'm generally happiest.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto Motor und Sport) A question to Sebastian. You obviously didn't do many laps yesterday. How much could you recover in P3, in terms of race preparation?

SV: Not much. Obviously, we had a touch of a small long run, I think two timed laps, so we're missing a bit. As the season progresses everybody gets better in terms of reading the sessions, understanding the tyres so I don't think we're in any weaker position. Would have been nice to do more laps but the little laps that I had this morning were fine. I think we know what we need to do. Now we see what the conditions are like. It's supposed to be a bit cooler, we'll see what the wind does. We have to react to those. That's far more important that maybe what we've missed, because that has an impact on how your balance is in the first stint and then how you are able to feel the car push or not and then put pressure on whoever's in front or disappear if you're ahead, or whatever.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Questions to Valtteri and Sebastian. For Valtteri, three-quarters of the time you're losing to Lewis is all in the last sector, he was three-tenths quicker than you. Is there something not to your liking in the car in that kind of corner. And for Sebastian, even though it's not as bad as in the first two years, there's still a difference in grip on the two sides of the grid. Does that worry you for the start tomorrow?

VB: Yes, definitely the last sector in the qualifying I did struggle more. It felt more tricky for some reason than, for example, in some of the practice sessions. There's been things I've been struggling with, with this car, with the brake modulation and front-locking and transferring the weight between the four wheels. It's fine details but just struggled to get it together. Many times 13 and 15, lost a bit of time. Sometimes I got it right but still I couldn't match Lewis in terms of cornering speeds, etcetera – but yeah, those are the longest corners, slow speed corners and normally the bigger differences are there.

And Sebastian, the grip differential.

SV: I don't know. We see tomorrow. I saw Formula 4 race but they start on the other side, so the polesitter starts left. Anyway, the guy who started left turned in first into the first corner, so I don't know. I don't think there's a big difference. We just need to make sure the cheerleaders tomorrow stay away from that side and they can get all excited on Lewis' side.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / Speed Sport) Lewis, you mentioned the rockets. F1 has a lot of high technology. A lot of it is kept hidden. What did you like about the high technology that you got to see at NASA?

LH: Well, to be honest, a lot of the technology I saw quite pre-dated. The most impressive thing was the big rocket that was one of the first rockets to go up in the '70s, and the engine technology of the most power has not progressed since then, from what they told me. That was like the best they could do with it. I think the most impressive thing for it is that it had like 1.5million pounds of torque in those five engines, and the distance of the blast of the jet was like two or three hundred metres, which was awesome. I think it was just mind-blowing to see what they were able to do. How amazing the technology, and how great the scientists were back in the '60s, '70s when they were building those space rockets, and then obviously now they're planning more missions to the Moon, and Mars, and the new space station, I guess they're going to have to start designing and building the new space station sometime because the life of that thing's about to run out. I think it was just great. There's no other country that I've ever been... everyone around the world knows about the journey to space. You see the movies and it's so fascinating, so to be there and actually speak to an astronaut who was the last one to go up to the space station and is going to be the one to pilot the next mission, I was like: "Can I join you? Or we can swap jobs, I don't mind doing your job." It's just mind-blowing when you think of how many intelligent people there are there working. I think there's something like 10,000 people working at NASA but I think there was a lot more in the earlier days and there are similarities to Formula One. Obviously on a much, much smaller scale but in terms of the science. Honestly, I'm a space geek. I was there and I was asking a million questions and I'd happily go and work at NASA if I had the brains to do so. I could definitely pilot one of those ships. No problem!

Q: (Les Kaiser – Speed City) Lewis you half way joked when you responded “can I do with you?” How serious would you be if they approached you in another year or two to join them?

LH: I would go immediately. I would go tomorrow. Generally, the trips are, like, two weeks, so I'd be back in time for the next trip. After the race, jump on the Shuttle, no problem. No, I really, really would love to go. I know someone that has gone up. It was quite expensive so I don't know how that's going to happen. If I win the lottery then definitely, I'm going to go.

Q: (Peter Habicht – The Auto Channel) Question to each of the drivers: Formula One has often been described as a space race in motorsports in comparison to other forms of motorsport. Who or what about the hundreds of people that support your cars, your efforts, impresses you the most or strikes you the strongest?

SV: Well, if you open the bonnet and you're allowed to have a good look, which normally people unfortunately are not, they don't get too close to the cars, then you'll be impressed by how much stuff there is going on, especially with the new engines that we have, how complex they are. But still, we manage to get (them to be) more and more robust, run for longer with more power so obviously in the last couple of years that has been very crucial and there has been a big step in all areas on the power unit side. But I think really the most impressive bit is how everything comes together. You know you talk about the car in the end but it's so much more. I know we've got the basic stuff: four tyres and yeah, for some people the cars look similar to how they looked ten, twenty, thirty years ago but how much has changed. And seeing all that coming together, the planning of the project and how much work is going into the project and every year build a new car which is crazy but a completely new car. You try to improve, you try to come up with new ideas, solutions, better packaging, design, materials. You want to save weight. And then to see winter time, in that regard, is very very exciting to see it coming together and then firing up for the first time, driving out on the track for the first time. It's really the work and brains of more than a thousand people. In the end, two drivers per team who have the chance to describe the feeling to drive the car so I think that's really one of the most exciting bits. In my opinion, that also makes it a team sport because I can't do it on my own, I'm not even close. You need every single one and you need to... I don't know if you can compare it to an orchestra, you need to play in sync, perfect timing and then only then are you able to come up with a competitive package because the other teams that you're up against are so good as well.

VB: I have to say it's how much every single person's work actually makes a difference. Every single woman and man in a race team, whatever areas they work on, at the factory, in the race team, on the engine side, everyone's work matters so much. All the credit goes to every single one in the team, there's no one person who can make the big difference. It is, as a team, it's really interesting to see, when a team works well, together, how big a difference you can make with the team spirit, and if everyone gives 100 percent instead of 99 percent and when there's nearly a thousand people, it makes a massive difference and that's nice to see.

LH: I will try and keep it short but for me it's the technology, it's the design. I think the most impressive part is when you go back to the factory and you see what's going on back then, a huge group of people with great creative minds coming together and really stretching the boundaries of the rules, legality-wise and advancing technology at a crazy rate. When you look at how they're building these engines and the amount of test components you see they've failed and then they are able to dissect it and improve it for the next time, that for me is just mind-blowing when I go there, and I've been in the sport for a long time, obviously, but to see that every year, growing and improving and the process in which they do that, particularly quality control, has come so far forward which is probably why we are able to have the reliability, and that for me is the most mind-blowing thing.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) To Sebastian and Lewis: at this race we can have the world title decided and we haven't mentioned it in this press conference. Does it come to your mind at any moment? When will you take it into consideration?

LH: Well, I mean it's a bit like a game of chess. Obviously right now it's check but there's still a long long way to go. There's still a hundred points available. Sebastian and his team are going to be working as hard as they can as are we. Who knows? It's going to go to the wire I still think. In the next four races, I think they are going to give it a great shot and I'm going to do my utmost to try and defend and not only defend but really maximise and win these races. I want to win these races, that's what I'm working towards and naturally, in winning races, points come and championships are won so that's what I'm here to do.

SV: Well, it's pretty straightforward. I think we have to win and then we see what happens. Obviously we are not in the position that we would like to be but still we have a chance so we go for that and it's pretty

straightforward. We have the car, we had the car to win the last three races, didn't happen, so I don't see why the next four races we shouldn't have the package to win so we start tomorrow.

LH: Buddy, do you have a question for us? Do you have a question for us? You sure?

Q: (“Buddy”) Are you excited to race in Austin?

LH: Am I excited to race in Austin? Well I'm excited to meet you and yeah, I love racing this track, it's so much fun, I think you'd love it. If I had a two-seater would like to go with me?

Q: (Christian Menath – Motorsport Magazin.com) Question for all three of you: it was pretty hot today, how much did you have to look at tyre temperatures, especially with ultrasoft in the fast flowing sector one or is the straight afterwards long enough to cool it down? How much was tyre temperature a concern for one lap today?

LH: I think tyres are definitely... I mean there are a lot of high speed corners here, what's really unfortunate is that TV's not really able to show you the forces that are going through not only our bodies but the tyres, the car, how it's flexing through these corners. I think here more than many of the other circuits through that first section you really can see the car shifting and turning. I don't think people realise how tight those corners are and how ridiculously fast we're going through them but it's fantastic. With these tyres, they're kind of like living tissue, you know? The temperature's moving all the time so how you manage them on the out lap, whether you get a small slide or a bit of wheelspin affects the next corner and the corner after that. It's kind of difficult to explain but it is really important to make sure you manage them in the best way possible to get the optimum performance for a lap and there is a knack to it for sure which obviously we are able to do.

VB: Nothing to add really. We could actually push relatively hard. Obviously we needed to take care on the out lap but like the first sector, we could really go for it and the long straights, they definitely make it easier to cool them down a bit but like Lewis said, you still need to not go crazy with them.

SV: Well first of all I don't like the imagination of living tissue; that just sounds a bit... Yeah, I think we would like to push more but you obviously have to look after the tyres and manage them which to some degree is fine because it's part of our skill set but still I prefer to be able to push more.

Ends