



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 Russian Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Romain GROSJEAN (Lotus), Daniil KVIAT (Red Bull Racing), Carlos SAINZ (Toro Rosso), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes), Felipe MASSA (Williams), Fernando ALONSO (McLaren)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Daniil, can we start with you. Your home race, obviously. Last year you had a great qualifying performance in fifth and this year you've finished six of the last seven races in a higher position than you started, so with the soft and supersoft combination of tyres we saw in Singapore, do you feel this should be another chance for a podium?

Daniil KVIAT: Well, first of all, I think it's nice to be home in Russia and it's great to have a home grand prix I think, so we can feel the support from the local fans. Talking about our chances, I think obviously it's not the easiest track for us, probably it's not suiting us as good as Singapore or Hungary, but I still think that as has been proven you always have to keep pushing and things can come towards us. There are a few long straights here, which probably don't suit us so well, however we will keep pushing; we will try to maximise our potential, find the right compromise and who knows what can happen in the race.

You're now the most successful Russian driver in Formula One history but the future of Red Bull's teams is hanging in the balance. Have you been given any assurances for 2016?

DK: Well, you know, I think there have been some rumours in the media and stuff like that. Obviously not the nicest things to hear about your own team, but you know, my job is to try to drive the car that I have as fast as I can and that's what I want to focus on first of all and the other things that are hanging in the air, as you said, I think they are up to other people in our team and I trust them 100 per cent, on what they are doing and I rely on them for these kind of questions, 100 per cent.

Thank you very much. Fernando, coming to you: celebrating your 250th grand prix entry this weekend, congratulations for that. You started 12th in the last two races, the team's best of the season. What are you going to be working on this weekend and at the remaining events this season?

Fernando ALONSO: Well, I think it's going to be more or less the same at the remaining races: trying to get some more information about the car and more philosophies on the car to set up for next year as well. So, some interesting things that we would like to test in these races and keep helping also Honda in terms developing the power unit: the driveability, reliability as well, that we had some up and downs during the season. But as you said the last two races were probably the most competitive ones for us, Singapore and Japan, so hopefully keep going in the same direction, just better. It's not too difficult as we start quite low, but it seems we are making some good progress, so we need to keep going like that.

Obviously the big talking point were the radio messages during the race in Japan. Did you think they were going to remain private and what kind of reaction have you had from Honda?

FA: Yeah, of course. Obviously we have been all season very positive, about the team and about the car, we faced some difficult times, some tough times, all the team and what you talk on the radio should remain private because you are talking with your team not publically. I think publically, as I said, we have been very, very positive all the time. You know sometimes it's normal and understandable, talking to the team, you know the level of frustration and the level of commitment that I have for racing and Jenson has for racing as well, when you are battling and you cannot hold anyone behind and you are losing positions is normal. But as I said, this is a very unique sport, that we have a microphone in our helmet and it goes live on television. Imagine in NBA or football players or something like that what we can find. This is normal and it's just talking to the team, it's understandable the frustration with the car.

Thanks very much. Coming to you Nico: Constructors' Championship within Mercedes' grasp here. Second year in a row you can clinch the Constructors' this weekend here in Sochi. What are your thoughts on that?

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, it is one of the aims of this weekend, to try to clinch that. Special to be able to do it again in such a manner, such a dominating manner. Really awesome job by the team. And again to have the chance to close it down so early. But, of course Ferrari has been strong recently, very, very strong even, so we need to be cautious, we still need to work hard, get the best out of it but of course we're optimistic.

Now, last year this race on a new track didn't turn out as people expected in terms of how the way the track performed with the tyres etc – you did almost the whole race on one set of tyres. With the tyres that have brought along this year what kind of race weekend can we expect? Can you give us your analysis of what lies ahead?

NR: Yeah, it is quite particular, because the asphalt is very special here. It is quite different. Therefore there are some new challenges you need to handle. Also the tyres being softer is going to be different again to last year, because last year there was hardly any degradation, I did the whole race without any pit stop, or with one on the first lap, and it's going to be quite different. Again we need to adapt to the new situation, so it could be an interesting one.

Q: Romain, coming to you, obviously since Suzuka you've been announced as a Haas driver for 2016. What does the next three years look like for you?

Romain GROSJEAN: Hopefully pretty successful! It was a great opportunity I had to join Haas. As I've said, leaving Enstone is going to be, from an emotional point of view, quite hard because I've spent ten years there. I think Fernando knows how it is in this team: very, very strong group of people. On the other hand, from a sporting point of view, I think the way Haas is coming to Formula One is very, very clever. He's been successful in his business, he's been successful in NASCAR. Coming alongside Ferrari – which is probably the biggest team in Formula One – makes sense, and for me to have a new experience with an American team can be very, very nice.

Q: You've qualified in the top ten at the last five races. Obviously we know of the problems going on in the background with your team at the same time all the other teams are still developing etcetera, etcetera. How have you and the team managed to do that, given the relative circumstances?

RG: I think, as I say, Enstone is quite a particular team in a way, the people stayed united and very strong together. I think the funniest part was not having any hospitality in Japan. It didn't matter at the end because what we want to do at the end is to do our performance, we want to race, we want to race hard and go for it and that's what we do. Just focussing on what you can do, what

you can change and forgetting the outside part of it is the key. We have done it pretty well, with some fun and hopefully, with five races remaining, we can do some good stuff.

Q: Felipe, last year here in Sochi, a very good race for Williams if not for you personally – but I guess this ought to be another strong one, and clearly the target for you personally this weekend would be another podium, right?

Felipe MASSA: Yeah. I think it's a good track for us so I really believe our car can be competitive on this track, which it was last year. I had a problem on the engine in the qualifying, so I had to start last but we're looking forward for the race – so I really hope we can be competitive, strong and finish with both cars in very, very good positions here.

Q: And where are you at with the thinking as a team? Are you still developing this car right through to the final race in Abu Dhabi, or are you focussing now very firmly on 2016, trying to bridge that gap to Ferrari and Mercedes?

FM: We had some new parts of the car in the last races. Even this race we have some little bits but I think we are already thinking about next year since a little bit of time. We understand it's very important to finish at least where we are in the Constructors' Championship but we really understand that next year is really, really important and, as soon as you start, the better it is, so definitely we're really concentrating on next year.

Q: Carlos, Suzuka another race where the result didn't match up to the qualifying and the performance that preceded it. What are you working on to try and reverse this pattern?

Carlos SAINZ: Yeah, it's been a difficult weekend in Suzuka with a lot of positives to take – but the P10 I think didn't show the good weekend that we had done until then. Obviously we had this problem in qualifying and then I did the mistake in the race after doing some good free practices in the wet. So, we just need a clean weekend without any mistake from my side, without any reliability problems on the team side and I'm sure we can put a very good result together because we saw that the performance is really there.

Q: And the same question I guess to you as I put to Daniil at the beginning. Dietrich Mateschitz has said a decision will be made on his teams by the end of this month. What assurances – and, indeed, alternatives – do you have?

CS: To be honest, I don't know and I'm not really taking care of that matter too much. As Dany said, I think we're here to drive and our job is to extract the maximum performance of our car. I just know that the team obviously is working hard, and now more than ever, to find something for next year. Obviously it starts to be a bit late and we need to design all the rear part of the car. When you don't have something at the rear at this stage of the year, it's a bit tricky – but I have full trust that they will come to a solution. To an agreement. I think Red Bull more than anyone deserves... they have done a lot for this sport, a lot for Formula One and they will end up having a decent engine, a decent package for next year.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Fernando, you put out a few tweets after the last race which weren't 100 per cent clear. So, just for the sake of clarity, to make it much easier, yes or no, will you be racing for McLaren in 2016?

FA: You didn't read the tweets.

I read them but they weren't totally clear...

FA: Of course I'm not English, my mother language is Spanish. In Spanish they were a little bit clear.

How about now, from my question, yes or no?

FA: The same. Yes. Of course.

100 per cent you'll be with McLaren, 2016 on the grid?

FA: And '17.

And 17

FA: Yes.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi, La Gazzetta dello Sport): Question for Nico, after the grand prix in Suzuka, Lauda said "we came back but we have to be cautious that the next race could be different again because it's different asphalt." Is it a worry – because last year Mercedes dominated the grand prix with five cars in the top six positions? It's really a problem with the soft and supersoft and the characteristics of the layout – or not?

NR: No, it's very unique this race, with the asphalt, with supersoft, soft compared to last year, soft, medium. So, it will be a particular challenge and we did show weaknesses on the soft, supersoft in Singapore. Big weaknesses. We have learned from that but, again, here is not Singapore so we need to do a really good job and it's not going to be as simple as maybe Suzuka was in terms of preparation.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Nico, while the results have not been as good as you have been expecting, how much does that take away from the maximum enjoyment you could get from racing?

NR: It's always an enjoyment but of course winning races increases that enjoyment further. It would be great to get back to winning ways very soon.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Autosport) Fernando, you've been asked about the radio messages. Obviously you are aware that some radio messages do get played out and I'm sure that behind the scenes the team is also aware of your frustrations regarding the lack of power, with Honda's reliability etc. So what are your intentions when you go onto the radio and you're saying 'this is a GP2 engine'? What's the end game there for you when you're saying that?

FA: I told you before, it's the frustration of battling hard and being a competitive sportsman. When you are in a car, in a race and you try to give it all and you are fighting lap after lap and you keep losing positions easily on the straight, even before the braking point, you get some frustration out there on the radio. I'm happy it was only broadcast in Suzuka because if you hear all the races, all the radio messages from me or from Jenson or whatever, you will be even more surprised.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports) Sorry to go back to those radio messages again, Fernando, but whether they were heard by the fans and broadcasters alike or whether they were just heard internally, Honda were always going to hear that message. Do you think that maybe, given the struggles you've had with McLaren and Honda this year, your messages were a little bit ill-timed, ill-conceived and not exactly helpful for the future of the partnership?

FA: Well, I think the most important part of the Suzuka weekend was on Wednesday when I visited the Sakura factory and I saw the engine programme for next year, when we had very long meetings and we went through all the difficulties that we are facing right now and all the possible solutions that we want for next year, so that was the most important part of the weekend and the messages that I think were important in the weekend, and those were very very clear and were much more clear than Sunday. On Sunday, it was just the frustration of – as I said – racing and just the competition against the others. Nothing new, because we know where we are lacking and we then define what are the problems. The important thing is to go forward and to be positive for

next year and as I said, the meetings in the week before Suzuka were the ones that for the Honda guys is if it's the question or if you concern what the Honda people thought in Suzuka on Sunday, I think on Wednesday it was much more important than Sunday.

Q: (James Ellingworth – Associated Press) Nico, we're now at the point in the championship where – as I understand it – even if you were to win the remaining five races, that wouldn't necessarily guarantee the championship, you'd have to rely – in that case – on some mistakes from Lewis. How does that affect your approach to the remaining races? Is there any part of you that is maybe looking forward to a possible mistake from Lewis?

NR: I don't really think about it in that much detail. I see the gap, I see that it's quite big considering there's just a couple of races left and just go for it, go for it. I need to try to win the races, that's what I'm focussing on, winning the races and then the rest... I'll just see how it goes.

Q: (Ian Parkes – Autosport) Daniil and Carlos: I appreciate that you've already been asked about the future of Red Bull and Toro Rosso, but sitting here right now, knowing the situation and how very close Red Bull are to going out of the sport as they lack an engine for next year, first of all do you have any concerns whatsoever that you will not be in Formula One in 2016 and secondly, knowing that, appreciating that, have you been exploring other options outside of F1?

DK: Well, like I said before, it's not great to hear these rumours and stuff like that of course but on the other side, if you look at it, what can I change? I can drive the car, I can try to put ourselves as high as possible at the finish of a race and then you have to be patient. Formula One is a rough world, you have to be patient, you have to consider it's a honeymoon at some point. The beginning of the year was very tough for us and then we started to climb, slowly but surely and we've been quite competitive in the last races, I think, so I think everyone has to be patient in the team and I think the right decisions will be taken in the future from our bosses. I'm sure... like I said I rely on them fully.

CS: Yeah, not much to add to be honest. We just need to wait, be patient as Dany is saying and trust that Red Bull is going to take the right decision and they're going to do the best, obviously, for the brand, for the team, for both teams and there is nothing that we can do. We are just sitting here, waiting but having 100 percent confidence in them and as I said before, Red Bull has done a lot for F1 and I'm sure F1 will end up giving them back a bit of what they have done for them. With all this, I'm pretty sure, hopefully that next year we can be here.

Ends