



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2015 United States Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Marcus ERICSSON (Sauber), Alexander ROSSI (Manor), Valtteri BOTTAS (Williams), Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari), LEWIS HAMILTON (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Lewis, three times a US Grand Prix winner, twice at the Circuit of the Americas. You, Nico [Rosberg] and Sebastian [Vettel] have finished one, two, three, in that order, on four occasions this season. If it happens again on Sunday, you are the world champion. What are your thoughts?

Lewis HAMILTON: Well, first of all, just happy to be here, excited; I always enjoy myself out here in the States. The track is fantastic; the race has been great here since 2012. Just excited for another weekend. I missed driving the car for the last two weeks.

Q: You spend a lot of time in this country, as we can see from your regular social media output? Why do you like the US so much?

LH: Well, I like travelling everywhere in the world, so it's not just the US, but I have a lot of friends out here. There's a lot to do. America has a lot to offer, in such a big space. I do a lot of my music out here, so this is kind of the central hub for music, so that's probably why I spend more time here than usual.

Q: Thank you for that. Moving on to Daniel: a podium here last year, of course, at the Circuit of the Americas, but pointless in three of the last five races, although your best result of the season came during that run, the second place in Singapore. This recent run now means you're behind your team-mate Daniil Kvyat in the championship. How important to you is it to finish ahead of him at the end of this season?

Daniel RICCIARDO: I don't know to be honest. Because we're not really fighting for the title it's sort of irrelevant. I think I have missed out a fair few bags of points at various occasions this year. But, yeah, I'm not too worried. Obviously you want to finish in front, I'm not going to lie, but when you're seventh or eighth in the championship it's sort of irrelevant. Yeah, the little Russian's jumped in front of me, but we'll see. I'm confident I'll end up with more points, but as I said, I'm not too fussed about it.

Q: So, we're reaching the end of October now, how confident are you about being on the grid next season and what assurances have Red Bull given you about how this whole thing is unfolding?

DR: Not much has changed to be honest. Yeah, we're still not really confirmed with anything yet. From my side I'm still confident I'll be racing. Confident we'll be there, hopefully competitive. I think that's more the concern. I have confidence we'll be on the grid it's just the concern is can we

be competitive? I want to make sure we can be. This year, obviously we have got a couple of podiums, which is nice, but certainly not enough to keep us extremely happy. So, yeah, we want to be competitive again and I think that's just as important as being on the grid.

Q: Alexander, coming to you, the only American driver in the field and the first American to race in the US Grand Prix in eight years. How proud do you feel about being in the series today and what's the reaction been like here in the States in the build-up to the race?

Alexander ROSSI: I think, first of all, that the reaction has been very positive, which is what we wanted to see, Of course there is pride that goes along with it, but that started in Singapore and Japan as well. Obviously to be here at home means a big deal, but at the same time we have a job to do and very clear objectives to meet. I'm looking forward to it; there are a lot of friends and family that will be coming this weekend. But I think once you get in the car and on track you appreciate the fact that there is a bigger picture.

Q: Obviously you jumped into the car quite late in the season. Two race outings so far and you beat your team-mate on both occasions. What goals have you set for yourself for the remaining events this season and how confident are you of securing a full-time ride for 2016?

AR: With the current situation with the performance difference in the cars I think it's very clear that the objective just needs to be continuing what we've done in the first two, as you said. Both of those weekends there was quite a disrupted Friday for the whole team, so I think if we have a strong Friday the Sunday result can be even more positive. In terms of next year, I'm obviously quite keen to be in a full-time seat next year, which is apparent. The position that I'm in with the team at the moment is good and we're looking to put that all together for next year.

Q: Kimi, coming to you, you said in Sochi that the collision with Valtteri Bottas was a racing incident, you've watched it again by now I'm sure, so how do you feel about it now and how have you left it with Valtteri?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Well it hasn't changed. Obviously there were some discussions and penalties given to me, but I would still do it tomorrow again, that doesn't change the story. Unfortunately, we came together in the end and we both lost a bit, but that's life, that's racing. I don't feel bad about it and if somebody feels that, it's up to them. It's OK for me. Like I said, I would still do the same thing next time and maybe it goes better.

Q: There was another good battle with your team-mate Sebastian Vettel in Sochi. Is the objective for 2016 to beat him or finish in front of him on a more regular basis?

KR: Well, obviously this year hasn't exactly been what we hoped but it's been much better than the previous year and I'm sure we are doing the right things but we don't get the results sometimes. That's fine, we are going in the right direction all the time and I'm sure when we get things running smoother and all the time better so we can definitely fight with him every week. Like I always said: I wouldn't be here if I wouldn't feel like that.

Q: Valtteri, coming to you, obviously in that incident in Sochi you lost what would have been only your second podium finish of the year. After some considered thought what's your attitude to it now?

Valtteri BOTTAS: For me it's the same really. It was a good weekend until the last lap, so of course disappointing to lose the points but my opinion hasn't changed. I wouldn't do anything different and it's now history, so I'm 100 per cent ready to move on.

Q: The result means there are only two points now between you and your team-mate Felipe Massa, so similar question to the one I asked Daniel I guess, how essential is it for you to finish ahead of him in the final standings?

VB: Of course it is, yes. As a driver you always want to beat your team-mate but as Daniel said, when it's not for either the top three or winning the title it's not that important. The main thing is to get the maximum points for the team with the two drivers. But personally I would prefer to keep in front and that's one of the goals for the rest of the year.

Q: Marcus, you didn't race here last year as Caterham didn't make the trip, but you were here, so what are you most looking forward to about racing on this Circuit of the Americas track?

Marcus ERICSSON: Yeah, I'm really looking forward to driving the track, I think it looks really cool; some nice corners, the first sector especially. Like you said, it was the first race I missed out last year, so I'm really looking forward to driving the track.

Q: You were out on the first lap in Russia, ending a 12-race finishing streak. You've been knocked out in Q1 in the last three races in a row but you have outqualified your team-mate five time in the last seven, so how would you sum up the state of play Sauber as we get to this closing part of the season?

ME: I think I've had a really good run from the middle of the season really. Then the last three weekends we've had some messy weekends with difficult Fridays and difficult Saturdays, so I'm not entirely happy with the last three events. I think we could have done better things there. Like you said, Russia was a tough one, going out on the first lap, especially because I think our car was competitive around there. So not very happy with the last three but looking forward to turning it around here in Austin.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Peter Windsor – Clarksport). Question to Valtteri. I'm sorry I know it's history but it's still interesting at least for us. After the race Kimi said that he was surprised the move didn't work because he had done that earlier in the race to you, at the exactly the same place, in exactly the same way and you had let him through and I wondered if that was the case from your point of view? And Kimi please add to this if necessary. In other words, earlier in the race did he do that pass exactly as he tried to do it later in the race?

VB: Yeah, I guess it's still interesting for you guys, but for us not so much. From my point of view the first one was quite a different one, it was much more clear that he could do it. And of course for me, as a driver, not going to leave the door open two times. So, for me, it was a different kind of situation, as we saw from the result.

Kimi, any response?

KR: No. It was for him anyway.

I'm just giving you the right of reply.

KR: Why would I need to reply? It doesn't change what we say anymore.

Q: (Peter Windsor – Clarksport) I guess the follow up question to Kimi is: did you not see that Valtteri was going to close the door on that second occasion?

KR: I saw it in the end but obviously once you've decided to go there... I tried to brake and turn in as much as I can but there's no way to avoid it. That's why... what can you do? Once you go there you do it or not. Once I saw that he's coming... I don't know. Maybe he didn't expect or didn't see me. Tried to slow down and turn in but y'know, in the end if there's no space there's no space. We're going to collide. It's an unfortunate thing but it's a part of racing. You get penalised sometimes, sometimes not. We are here to race, it's pointless to cry afterwards. I'm sure that people like it more like that than just following each other, so... it's part of the thing.

Q: (Joseph D Love – Tennessee Tribune) This is a generic question, how do you create more enthusiasm in urban black America for Formula One? I know we're up against football and basketball – how do you make Formula One as exciting for the urban kid in America?

LH: Don't look at me, ask these first. I'd love to see what these others think!

DR: Just try and be as 'lads-y' as possible. Just make it exciting. I mean, we try. I think the sport's, most of the time, pretty exciting. As performers – let's say – we try and do what we can to make it cool. In all honest I think Austin, this circuit, is one of the best on the calendar for excitement. I've said it before, there's so many places to overtake, I think the layout is perfect with big, wide apexes, so you can have a lot of fun on this track. In these terms, I think that creates the excitement: overtaking, fights. If it's just a single train race it's obviously less exciting so... I think this track creates a lot of that. I think as drivers most of us try to be y'know, like... cool people, funny people. We try to bring fans into the sport. Yeah... I don't know. I don't know if I've answered your question.

Alexander, do you want to have a go at it?

AR: Sure, I mean, from an American perspective, I think the biggest thing, leading onto what Daniel was saying, the excitement level needs to be there but beyond that I think the accessibility. Obviously motorsports is something that is quite difficult to get into – and that's the same for any young kid trying to do it. I think the biggest thing is a direction where to go. I think that's the thing that's missing the most. Beyond that, kind of just... there's always things that can be done in terms of making it expand to a different part of the States. I think it's very much... Formula One is three locations and in America we're trying to grow it as much as we can. I think once that happens it'll appeal to a much broader mass.

Final thought Lewis?

LH: Yeah, just sitting here trying to think. I agree very much with what they mentioned. It's difficult for people to get attached here in America. Obviously they're crazy about NFL and NBA and there sports that you can just go and buy the equipment; buy a ball or a racquet and go play down the road or in the street, whereas karting, you can't. I was very lucky, my Dad bought me a go kart and we drove it around a car park, like a DIY Homestore car park for a while – but there's not that much accessibility, as he was saying, for kids who say "hey, I want to go go-karting." You have to plan it weeks in advance almost, or save up. So, I don't really know. Maybe Formula One can start to engage more with the NFL or with the other sports. The brands that you have here in the States, and start to engage with them. I never, every see... I don't know if I've ever seen an NBA player come – I've had a friend come once. Otherwise it's never really been anyone from those sports, different kind of sports come and try to see what Formula One's about to maybe bring some attention to it, maybe. As you can see, I'm doing as much as I can – but I'm only one person. Yesterday I was go-karting with some kids, there were two black kids with us. One passed me, the first time I'd ever been on track with a black kid and, coming past it was like seeing myself come by – it was kinda funny. It was good. It's open to everyone.

Q: (Seff Harding – Zero Zone News) This question's for everyone. There's been a lot of talk about rule changes, or taking a more of an old school approach to the sport. I wanted to know how you guys felt about that – because I guess there's a little fear that maybe the cars are getting too technical, you guys might end up being like David Hasselhoff in Knight Rider, talking the car and the car's driving itself. Just wanted to know how you guys feel about taking a more old school approach to the cars, taking a little more tech out of it.

KR: I think it's the right direction. F1 should be easily the fastest racing cars in the world and it doesn't look right some races where we go and GP2s are a few seconds off almost. They should be

definitely faster, more like they were in the mid-2000s. I think that's the way they plan to go and I think it's more fun for us, it looks much more greater to the spectators. But also, they have to make it also... nicer for all the people. Everybody is complaining it's boring, it's this and that. If something doesn't change nobody will care how the car looks or how fast they are. Something has to change, that's for sure, for F1 to get back more interesting for everybody – but I think it's a good way to go, make the cars faster and more exciting looking.

Valtteri, your thoughts on this.

VB: I think the main thing, like every driver for sure, it's likely the cars are going to be quicker, so that's a good thing. Maybe more tricky to drive, hopefully. The main thing, the cars are fast and more spectacular for everyone. I'm not sure it's really an old school thing because the sport will keep developing. It's a good direction.

Marcus?

ME: First of all, I think the cars today are still a lot of fun to drive for us drivers but like Valtteri says, of course faster cars are always going to be nice for us drivers – but I think there's a fine line there. To not make it too much like ten, 15 years ago when there was not so much overtaking. I think the racing today is great, with a lot of fights and overtaking. I think we should not cross that line and make the races just follow each other and no overtaking. But yeah, of course, faster cars is going to be more fun for us and more fun to watch.

DR: I think sometimes having such a big difference between cars is not so fun for a spectator as well. You see, I think it was a Williams pass a McLaren in Sochi and it was like it was standing still. That... for a spectator seeing that. That driver's not better and he's passed him... holding your foot flat down the straight – there's no real skill required so when it looks that easy then it's a little bit... I think it takes something away from the sport, one way or another. So, you always want a bit more equality. I mean, sure, you always want the top teams and you always want to look up to racing for a top team, so you always... there's got to be some sort of division but a smaller division would be nice. More competition I think, more drivers fighting for wins. I think then, when you win a race also, the reward is much bigger. Somehow to get that back, I think, would be good.

LH: I think it does need to change. I've not really looked at the changes they're proposing, to be honest, but it needs to be... for example, with the DRS, it doesn't feel organic, like natural racing. Whatever changes they make, I want to see closer racing. Wheel to wheel racing. It needs to be like go-karting was. If, y'know, go-karting, wheel to wheel and those guys following the train overtaking. We need to make Formula One a bit more like that. Somehow. I don't know how they're going to do it. It needs to be a lot different to what it was in the last 20 years.

AR: I'm going into my third race so I don't really have much of a comment, other than the fact I'm not really racing anyone at the moment other than one other car. Obviously I have to agree with what everyone said but for my own personal views, nothing different.

Q: (Greg Creamer – COTA Big Screen Production) Kind of following up this discussion, there's been a lot of talk about the power units in that and the fact that they are a little bit disparate right now in terms of performance. But what about a re-vamp of the aerodynamic approach, because what you guys were talking about – Lewis in particular – about the go-karting and running close and that, you don't seem to be able to do that right now because you get close enough, you wash the front end out, there's no stick? How about re-vamping the aero on the car to get more done, maybe with a tunnel, less sensitivity in the nose so you can follow somebody through say, the last turn at Monza and be able to run right up and not lose the nose as opposed to all the focus on all the power units? That seems like that would improve the racing.

LH: It does seem that way but I don't think that's possible. You've got turbulence behind the plane, it's the same thing, you get turbulence behind the car. All these vortices that are bouncing off the car, whichever rule they change to keep downforce, it's always going to be like that. They need to do something like where when you're getting close to another car and the car in front has to... the cars always have to have the same amount of downforce, no matter how close you get, so I don't know how they'll achieve that but that would be kind of neat.

Q: (Tony DiZinno - NBC Sports) Alexander, having had FP1 a couple of years ago, how much nicer is it to have past F1 machinery track experience as opposed to the last two events you've done?

AR: I'll let you know tomorrow. Obviously it gives you a baseline but at the same time the cars in '13 were clearly very different to what they are now. I don't know how much is applicable to be honest. I think it's more of a bonus, the fact that I've actually driven the track, more than anything else.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Honorary) Daniel, Renault has a new engine in the works. What has Renault told you and what has the team told you about this engine?

DR: Yeah, it's available if we want to use it. Obviously that would mean a penalty, though, so we've got to understand if it's worth it. Last I heard, it's not massive so from my understanding it's probably not worth taking it but yeah, I think we're down such a chunk that I don't think we're going to gain enough in this short time to make it up so if we start from the back, I don't think we're going to make (up) the ground we need. Right now, I would say we're probably less likely to take it. That's about it. Hopefully today they tell me something different and we've found a bigger chunk of horsepower from it but I think realistically there's not a whole lot.

Q: (Peter Windsor – Clarksport Ltd) Just following up on what you were saying there, it looked as if in sector three in Russia your car was actually not bad at all in terms of putting its power down and racing Ferrari- and Mercedes-engined cars and on that basis, I wonder where you feel you're at around here now, on this circuit, bearing in mind the sector three here as well? How quick is the car now?

DR: The car's good and I was surprised to hold Valtteri and Kimi off for as long as I did. Once they caught me I thought I wouldn't have sat in front as long. That was definitely some nice little surprises, I guess, in Russia. I think it has progressed for sure, the power as well but I think the car has really come alive and yeah, the grip we have through all those tight, twisty bits is really good. I think this circuit will suit us more so yeah, I'm hoping we can be more competitive here. It just seems that (in) qualifying we don't really have that one lap pace but then (in) the races we seem to be a lot more competitive so if we can somehow start towards the front then I think we can stay there. We'll see how we go but I'm definitely excited to race here if we're not floating down the river.

Q: (Diego Mejia – Canal F1 Latin America) To all of you; Pirelli is set to stay for quite a few years. What would the drivers like to see from the tyres looking at the next few seasons?

VB: Maybe more grip, that's always nice, more grip. I think there have been some tracks that – for example Russia – even the supersoft has been a bit too hard so yeah, I'm sure that they are learning from all these things but I think this is adjusting to the different tracks because every tarmac is so different tracks because every tarmac is different, every track is so different, so to make the races exciting, a good quick tyre for the track, I'm sure they are pushing for that so we will see what they can do.

KR: I think we've had a lot of discussions about Pirelli and obviously they have been blamed for many things but it's not easy for them to produce tyres that... first of all I don't think they are ever going to be able to produce tyres that everyone is happy with. Somebody is always complaining and then we are not allowed to do testing so how can they improve the tyres? We always say, OK,

we should go this or that way but they don't have the time on the circuit to do anything so that doesn't help them. I don't really see the point of discussing here what we would like. For sure they will talk to us. I think everybody has to work together with the teams to decide that OK, we can do testing, also helping Pirelli in that way. When teams cannot decide themselves together who does the test or whose car is being used then Pirelli cannot do any laps. It's very difficult to improve tyres and do what the teams are asking of them. I think it's up to the teams to provide them also the possibilities to get the tyres running in a proper test and try things. I'm sure they will find a way to do that and I'm sure we will get what everybody's more or less happy with.

LH: I don't know. As Kimi said, it's pointless everyone saying what we would like if we can't do any testing. I don't really particularly... more performance is what we always want and I think they've got to make a big step if that's going to be the case.

Ends