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Thursday Press Conference Transcript

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DRIVERS – Daniel RICCIARDO (Red Bull Racing), Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN (Ferrari), Kevin MAGNUSSEN (Haas), Sergey SIROTKIN (Williams)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Daniel, it's Red Bull's home race and off the back of a number of competitive showings in recent weeks from the team are you expecting another strong performance here?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yep, yeah, I am. I think we've had good pace... I think this year in general we've had good pace on pretty much all layouts we've been too. I think the races we have finished I think fifth has been the worst on track finish, so we've been there, if not on the podium, then close to it. A few bits of damage last week I think, which cost us the chance of a podium, or cost us a podium I believe, but generally we've been strong. In '16 Max got a podium here, '17 I did, so hopefully for the fans both of us can manage to get on there on Sunday.

Q: Now that's this weekend but obviously a big story so far this year has been talk about your future and last week in the Friday press conference, Eric Boullier admitted that there had been some preliminary talks between you and McLaren. Just how serious has the interest been from other teams in you, and does that delay you making a decision about your future or are you close to making one?

DR: Of course there has been a bit interest. Personally, I want to get something done, ideally before the summer break. More from a personal point of view. I want to go on break with as clear mind, so it feels like a break. I think it was a few years ago when I was making the transition from Toro Rosso to Red Bull, that all happened during the break and it wasn't a fun August break for me, so just from that I would like to get something done. Obviously with Red Bull they've committed to Honda, so they've kind of got all the cards on the table, so I know what I'm getting there, and things are starting to get to a point where I know what's what and hopefully I'll have something soon for everyone.

Q: Thank you. It would be unfair just to ask Daniel that question, so Kevin, moving on to you, how does your future look with Haas at the moment?

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: Yeah, no news. They have an option on me and so I don't think there is much chance of me going anywhere else but we'll just take it as it comes, there's no stress at the moment.

Q: Kimi, a question you get every year, how does your future look right now?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: Same as always, every year. We'll see.

Q: No news about your future then, but this year you've looked comfortable on Sundays and it was your fourth podium of the season last weekend, but you've admitted that Saturday

didn't quite go to plan. What have you and the team got to do to make sure Saturdays run a bit more smoothly?

KR: Just do better. Better results obviously and be more further up. Obviously that makes the Sundays a lot easier, especially most of the races it has been very difficult to overtake. The last race was a lot different on that side, so it was also more fun. I think we have been pretty decent all the way through in qualifying, part from the last part, or the last runs, so just need to tidy up a bit.

Q: Kevin, we'll come back to you after the future talks. You have more points now than you had in the last two years combined in Formula 1. Haas has shown some really impressive pace but not always taken all the opportunities, so how high are you aiming this year?

KM: That's difficult to say. On a good weekend our car is good enough for fourth best team and I think what we have to do is eliminate those bad weekends. When it's good, it's good enough for fourth and yeah, Renault are pretty far ahead in the points, but it's still a pretty long season, but they seem to be very consistent and perhaps too consistent for us this year. But we will do our best. As we see at the moment, from fifth down to eighth it's not that spread out, it's very close, so hopefully we can fight for fifth.

Q: Thank you. Sergey, thank you for waiting and welcome to the press conference. It's your rookie season and it probably hasn't gone quite the way you envisaged at the start of the year. Have you been able to enjoy the way this season has gone so far?

Sergey SIROTKIN: For sure, it didn't really go in a way we all really hoped in the winter. So, for sure in some terms I could enjoy it a bit more, a bit more fighting for the points, fighting for good results, fighting at least other cars on track, which unfortunately sometimes we are not able to do now. But, you know, it's a different challenge. The challenge, how I look at that, is the work back at the factory, where I feel like I can play my role. I can play my role in trying to the united with the team, be one of them, work with them, to get over the difficult moments and to get success after it. I still do enjoy this side of the story, but for sure it's not really how we came into the winter tests and how we tried to approach it. But we are where we are now and I still try to enjoy just the fact of being here. I try to enjoy racing. I think as soon as you start to think too much about where you are, how far you are in the field, that's the point where it becomes difficult. So far now I just try to focus on something that I really like to do and something where I can play my role in the team and help them to get over. It's a different enjoyment but it's still enjoyment.

Q: You mention the work back at the factory but right now we're in the middle of three consecutive races. Is that something that makes it hard to see progress for Williams when it is that relentless?

SS: Yes and no. Obviously this race is going to be a tough one for us. You saw that on the results that the Williams wasn't that strong already [here] last year and I would expect that it is not going to be much easier for us than Paul Ricard last week. That's probably like the more negative bit but the good bit is that in the next few weeks we have some good things coming on the car, which we have been working on for quite a while now. I don't want to be too optimistic but we all have high hopes for those bits.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Kimi, I know you get plenty of questions about your future, but there was a link earlier in the week suggesting that McLaren might be interested in your services. I know that a while ago you suggested that you would be happy to see out your career with Ferrari or would you entertain the prospect of continuing in F1 with another team?

KR: I don't know really. I said, I think it was 2007 already, that I would finish Ferrari and obviously at some point it didn't look like that and now it looks like that again. You never know what comes after and this and that, but we will see. As always a lot of talk and I'm not really happy to comment on those. We'll see at some point what happens, including me. Let's wait and see.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and Speedsport) Kimi, in France, with Vettel on the back foot, you were free to run your own race. Was that more fun, to be able to race for yourself and not have to play a team strategy?

KR: I don't... how you tried to ask it is probably a bit wrong. I think really it comes to how the circuit was and how we could race against each other and actually overtake. If you take a couple of recent races, you haven't been able to overtake really; everybody has been pretty much following each other. I think in that part, for whatever reason, we were able to race than say a couple of races before. Obviously what happened in the race, we were racing two different between ourselves so it was all normal. I don't think that really made it certainly different, him being in front of me or behind. I think it was the case of actually being able to overtake and race wheel to wheel with people, that was the most fun for a while.

Q: (Péter Vámosi – Racingline.hu) Daniel, have you ever thought on a shoe with Prince Albert in Monaco, because Christian Horner told you do this on the team radio?

DR: Taking it back! It's good memories. I might start celebrating again actually, it feels good. He was pushing for me to do one with Prince Albert, but the problem is that I live there, in Monaco, and I just thought if he doesn't like it then maybe I'd have some residential problems, so better that I play the game and be respectful.

Q: (Andrea Tajthi – Motorsportmania.hu) My question is for Kimi. It seems that your wife means to start to collect your podium caps. She already has a third place and second place caps. Do you want to also give here a first place cap also, in the near future?

KR: Obviously, I'm happy to give it, if we get it, but the cap is not the reason to try to win or not to win. We keep trying and hopefully we'll get there.

Q: (Daniel Horvath - Motorsportmania.hu) Question for Kevin. Kevin, we are almost halfway through the season and it seems like it is your strongest year so far in Formula One. How could you evaluate your season so far?

KM: Yeah, I think it's been a pretty good season so far. The car is better this year than last year. I don't think... well, in Formula One I haven't had this good and competitive a car since my first year with McLaren. It's really good. It's a lot more fun going racing when you know you have a car you know can fight for points and top fives on a good day. So yeah, I'm enjoying it a lot. I think part of the reason... obviously, the car is better but this is my second year with Haas as well, and it's the first time in my career, my whole career, even before Formula One that I've spent a second year in the same team. It's a big advantage knowing everyone, and more so just having that experience together. So, y'know, every race when you go into the race preparing, you can look back at a race that you did with the same people, and almost the same car. There's a lot of experience there in the second year that is a big advantage as well.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Question for Kimi, really simple one Kimi, have you or any of your representatives had a chat with anyone at McLaren regarding the possibility of driving for them next season, whether you're interested or not.

KR: I spoke to them, for sure, but in the past a lot obviously when I used to be there. Like I said, I have zero interest to get involved in all the nonsense, in my view.

Has anyone had a chat regarding next season?

KR: You would like to know, would you? You can take it as you want. I don't think you anyhow ask our opinions about a lot of stuff you guys write, so, it goes either way, you can put yes or no. You usually write what you decide yourself, whether it's true or not!

Q: (Ian Parkes – New York Times) Question for Kimi and Daniel. Given where we are at in the season at the moment, it's already beginning to look like a two-horse race in the drivers'

title. Do you guys feel that's the case or do you feel you've still got a genuine shot at winning this championship with the right car, the right circumstances.

DR: I feel... I still feel we're in it, to be honest. For sure, we're still a little bit a long way from it, if you know what I mean, from a points perspective. But I feel we're more in it than we have been the last four years I've had with the team. Four? Five? Whatever! As I touched on earlier, we're going to circuits that we didn't think we'd be on the podium, and we're getting a podium, or having the pace for it, so I know we're still going to have to take a penalty in the next few races, and we're still on the back foot in some areas – but I feel on performance alone, we're closer than we ever have been. That's still giving me a bit of hope and confidence. There's still a long way to go. And obviously, the team's pretty aggressive with updates. So all we need is a couple more to give us an extra bit here and there and we could probably start to creep back inside it. Like always, you get one win and all of a sudden it's 'you're back in the fight, you're back in the hunt'. If we got a win and the top guys had a bad weekend all of a sudden, we're the talk of the town again. I think it's still too early to count us out.

Kimi, do you still feel like you're in the title race this year?

KR: If you purely take the points, for sure. If you count how many points there are left, for sure, yes – but obviously we've got, not the ideal things happening in a couple of races where we didn't finish, so that put us in a little bit trickier position – but apart from that, we've been pretty OK. So, we keep doing, and try to stay out of any issues and to put things solid, as well as we can. It's going to be a long way still – but of course with the two small issues have not been ideal but it's not a disaster.

Q: (Zsolt Godina - F1vilag.hu) Daniel, what do you think about Red Bull's partnership with Honda, and how does it affect your decision regarding the future?

DR: I think in short it probably won't have an effect on what I choose to do. I think just now, as I touched on now, it gives me a bit more clarity of the direction the team's going. As I said, they've pretty much got everything now laid out in front of me and it's really up to me to understand, I guess, what I think of it. I see the pros with the decision, obviously, the chance to start something new with Honda and yeah, so, I guess it's now for me to think about. In a way, it's a good thing that they have made a decision. We'll see. Hopefully in a few weeks.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Daniel, if you could pick your own team-mate who would be ideal for you?

DR: I know the answer you want, right? Kimi! Or Valtteri! Just pay me the €200 later. Shall I answer it seriously? I don't know. No idea. But you can write that if you like. Sell more papers in Finland!

Q: (Peter Hlawiczka - F1news.cz) To all four drivers. Third DRS has been added here – do you think it will improve overtaking, and will it affect your setups in some way?

SS: I mean, of course it will give an extra bit of possibility, at least to maintain the gap to the car ahead a bit easier, if we are talking for one, two three laps, or whatever. In other occasions, like in places where you probably wouldn't be close enough to do the move, like down into Turn Three, Four, whatever it is now. It will probably, with the extra DRS, you get a possibility to get within a reasonable distance to the car ahead and then try a move. Again, I didn't race with F1 here last year so I don't know exactly how it was. I take whatever it will be?

Kevin, the midfield battle is very tight. Do you think an extra DRS zone is going to affect that?

KM: Yeah, I think it was already... it wasn't the worst circuit for overtaking already, so I think that whole... the longest straight on the track, which is already a pretty long straight, with DRS is probably going to be fairly easy to overtake here. We'll see.

Kimi, your thoughts on an extra DRS zone. As you said in France, we had more overtaking last week.

KR: Yeah, I mean half of the track is DRS, so it should make it pretty easy. I don't know if it's too easy or not. Obviously we want overtaking but there must be a point where it's kind-of artificial overtaking. But let's see.

Daniel, your thoughts.

DR: Nothing much more to comment. I don't see a negative with it at the moment. It should be OK, unless, as Kimi touched on, unless it's really easy. Then it might take a bit out of it. I think, for now, I see it as a positive. I don't think it will affect the setup. I don't think so. Not much will change – probably just more overtakes during the race.

Q: (Aldona Marciniak – Przeglad Sportowy) Sergey, you're stepping out of the car for FP1 and last year you were the one who was stepping in for Friday, for Renault, so could you give me both perspectives: on the one hand, what is the approach of the driver who's in the car only on Fridays every few months; and the second one, the one you have right now, how do you feel giving the car to Robert tomorrow?

SS: Yeah. Considering how it is getting in, for sure it's not easy when you don't drive the car consistently; every time you jump in, on the one side you know that the team expects a good job from you straightaway. Straightway there are some tests to do, some developments going on and you need to perform as the team wants you to perform, but at the same time, as you're not in the car that often it still needs a bit of time to get in and find a rhythm. Looking back from the other perspective, obviously Robert will take over tomorrow. I would say... talking to him, I think that's exactly what he thinks about it and how he looks at that. Again, it's exactly the position I was in last year so I perfectly know how he feels there but again, it's still disadvantages and advantages so it depends on how you look at it.

Q: Part of that was how much does it impact on the rest of your weekend?

SS: For sure it's never ideal to lose track time, especially for me in my first year. Even like last year, when I jumped in, even though it's a short track with not too many corners I think we all found it quite difficult, quite difficult to get the rhythm and to properly understand it so for sure it's not ideal but I'm in this position so I have to do the best from where I am.

Q: (Giovanni Messi – News Formula Uno) Kevin, you have been running a great season until now, especially against your teammate, Romain. How can you explain to us this kind of difference during this year and especially if you think you can continue in this way?

KM: Yeah, as I said before, this year we've got a good car and especially in terms of consistency from race to race it's not only been good at one or two races this year. Last year our car was good here at this race and it was good in Australia and it was OK in a few other races but then it was a very up and down and difficult to understand. This year we've got a car that is a little bit easier to work with, little bit easier to get to that top level and yeah, I think that's the kind of consistency that we needed and we've got that this year. In terms of Romain, I think he's had a pretty tough year so far but he's a very quick, intelligent driver so I'm sure he's going to get back.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesporte.com) Daniel, we have been hearing concerning Max's contract with your team; especially the financial side, we have never read it, probably it must be true. If you decide to go to Red Bull, to stay there, will you request the same exceptional conditions the team offers to Max in the last contract, considering that you are more efficient in terms of results last year and even this year?

DR: Obrigado. Obrigado. Means thank you. I guess, to be honest, what I... I appreciate what you're saying. I guess what I chose to negotiate is confidential, I guess. One thing I will say is that this year, obviously since I've been with the team, but this year the results have showed and having a couple of wins and again Monaco makes me smile when I just say that but it was a big achievement for me, especially after what happened a couple of years ago. There's been some important boxes which I feel I've ticked this year which obviously can help me out in discussions and moving forward

with my career so yeah, but I guess financial stuff, I'll keep behind the closed doors. But yeah, I'm happy with where I'm at and with what I feel I can bring to the table.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) Daniel, I know your team likes Budapest, Singapore but could you say the Red Bull Ring fits your car or is it just a circuit like the others, difficult, too many straights?

DR: I think, from my little bit of understanding about aerodynamics, I think the extra DRS zone will take a little bit of that – I guess, obviously – the drag away but I think that kind of minimises the deficit in some ways so I think I'm right in saying that that probably doesn't hurt us too much. And then obviously the second, third sector is more corners than power-related. I think the last couple of years we've had a pretty good car here and I think this year should be no different, potentially even better, let's see. Yeah, on paper it's probably still not as good as a Budapest or a Singapore for us but a win? Who knows but at least aiming for a podium should be somewhat realistic.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Kevin, you've mentioned the improved car that you've got for this year. You've seen, first hand, the resources that the likes of McLaren and Renault have got available so when you compare that to your team, how proud does that make you of the job that your guys have done, and does it make you a bit surprised to see that McLaren, if anything, is slipping back this season?

KM: It makes me proud, for sure. It's an impressive thing for such a small team to be competing against the likes of Renault and McLaren, beating Williams and even Force India is quite a bit bigger than us. So yeah, it's something to be proud of and it's a good job from the little team that we're in. I would say I'm quite surprised, as well, especially with McLaren. I think when I was there it was very clear that it's a great team, a very big team and yeah, beautiful team when I was there. I've lost touch with them, I don't talk to them any more, I don't know the problems they're facing at the moment but it's a shame, for sure. I'm happy for us that we can compete with them and beat them at times but for sure, it's not where they belong.

Q: (Louis Dekker – NOS) Do you think this year this lap can be done in 59.9s?

Q: Daniel, you're smiling, have you gone under 60s in the simulator?

DR: No, that seems optimistic. What was pole last year, 1m 02s was it? Maybe if we had a hyper (soft tyre), maybe but no, the DRS will obviously give us a bit but I think to get more than 2s on such a short lap already, that seems cool but a bit optimistic. Yeah.

KR: I don't know. I guess everybody looks but is it going to happen? I don't know. For sure Daniel said the DRS will give you free lap time. I don't know yet. We'll see.

Q: Sergey, have you had time to do this track in the simulator and get a lap time?

SS: I don't think we'll be able to do it under six anyway but it's good to aim for, for sure.

KM: I don't think so.

Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Kimi, Daniel said he would like his future sewn up by the summer break. Do you have a deadline in your mind, when you know what you'll be doing in 2019?

KR: No, I think I've been there so many times so... For sure, before next year I will know. It's a pretty normal situation on my side.

Ends