



Press Information

2019 Austrian Grand Prix Saturday Press Conference Transcript 29.06.2019

DRIVERS

1 – Charles LECLERC (Ferrari)

2 – Lewis HAMILTON (Mercedes)

3 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Paul Di Resta)

Q: *[Question inaudible]*

Charles LECLERC: In FP1 I struggled a little bit and then we did some changes and then from FP2 it was quite good. A big pleasure to drive this car on the limit; it just felt great, and very happy to bring the pole position back home. But tomorrow we need to finish the job.

Q: **A very different tyres strategy to Mercedes who are going to be your ultimate challenge. You're starting on the soft; they're starting on the medium. Do you firmly believe you went the right way?**

CL: Yeah, on actually what we tested in FP2 we are pretty happy with the choice we made, so we'll try tomorrow.

Q: **And it's going to be pretty hot tomorrow. What are the conditions going to be like?**

CL: It's going to be very difficult, physically, first, because it's very, very warm, but also for the car, so yeah it will be all about management of everything and hopefully a good result tomorrow.

Q: **Well done, it was an epic lap. Lewis, that was a nervy session, it looked like everyone was hunting for a slipstream. We heard the team trying to put you in that position, I think you tried to position yourself well for that last run, but Charles did a very good job.**

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, congratulations to Charles, he's been quick all weekend. We've just not really been able to keep up with them this weekend. Positioning was so difficult out there and I was always at the front so I was never getting a slipstream. Luckily on that last lap I was in an OK position, but it was very tight right at the end. I didn't know if I was going to get to start the lap or not. I saw three cars behind me

trying to start their lap. So, a bit of a panic, but nonetheless I'm grateful. Max has been driving really well all weekend as well. I think it's cool to see three different teams in the top three positions.

Q: Last Saturday you were keen to get Charles to race. You're up against it tomorrow, you're going to have to fight these two for this win aren't you?

LH: Yeah, I'll go and fight the young 'uns, man! It's cool. I'm representing for the more grown men I guess. Nonetheless I'm excited to get out there and race with these guys, they're both so talented, so fingers crossed we can put on a good show for them tomorrow.

Q: Max, you got the biggest cheer today. Red Bull's home race, I don't think you could have asked for much more. Could be a front-row start, as Hamilton is under investigation for a Q1 infringement with infringement, but how strong was that?

Max VERSTAPPEN: Yeah, I'm actually really happy at the moment. For us, this is an amazing result on this track, which is not easy for us. The whole weekend... I think also again with the upgrades we brought here the car seems to be working again better.

Q: You won this race last year and you've put yourself in a strong position. How much does it mean to you to have this support around the track?

MV: It's great. It puts a big smile on my face and hopefully I can give them a great result tomorrow.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Charles, both of those laps in Q3 were good enough for pole position. Tremendous performance by you and the team, just how satisfying is this for you?

CL: Obviously I'm extremely happy. We have been competitive since FP2 but it's always difficult to do a lap when you need to in Q3, but we did, so I'm very happy. We changed a little bit the car after the first run in Q3. I knew it would be a compromise a little bit for the first sector but actually it wasn't that bad and then I improved quite a lot in the third sector, which was nice to see. Very happy for the team for the pole position but it's a shame for Seb, as I think probably the two cars should be closer to first and second, so yeah, a bit of a shame for the team but very happy for my own performance.

Q: And just looking ahead to the race, how confident are you about the race pace of your car?

CL: Well, on Friday actually it didn't look bad compared to Mercedes but also Red Bull, so we are pretty happy I think. We are quite competitive this weekend. I think tomorrow the start will be very important. There is a long straight after it, but there is a long straight after it, but normally we are quite fast on the straights so hopefully we can keep first position in the first three corners, but the pace itself looks promising.

Q: Lewis, it's been a bit of a tricky weekend for Mercedes so far. Great lap from you at the end to get second place but can you just tell us about the performance of your car and how that session was for you?

LH: Well, firstly congratulations to Charles, he did a great job. He's done a great job all weekend. For us, yeah, we've been chipping away at it, but early from the get go we noticed a bit of a deficit to the Ferraris. We thought it would be a bit closer than it was but they eked out some more time in P3 and going into qualifying. We definitely under-estimated how fast they would be, I would say. I think ultimately on the straights, they really kill us on the straights, so they've got that extra bit of power that really works well here and I guess they just managed to figure out how to get their car to work around the medium and high-speed corners. I think for us, the car has been feeling good, but as I said, we can't do much more on the straights and I'm not really quite sure why it is we lose time on the straights but that's something we're working towards. The last part was really difficult. I think there were three cars right behind me going into the last corner, everyone was waiting and waiting and waiting and pushing it to the limit. We rarely go out right at the end of qualifying but as you could see it was quite a bit windier today and I think tow was probably important. Nonetheless I'm really happy with the position to get up here and I'm excited to have a race with these two.

Q: You're under investigation for an incident in Q1 with Kimi Räikkönen, what's your take on that?

LH: One of the team's cars came by and I was braking for the hairpin at Turn 3 and I saw the other one coming so I got off the brakes and tried to go straight on to try and go out the way because I didn't want to meet them in the corner. I don't think I met them in the corner but I think that probably put him off I would have thought, so it wasn't ideal. I wasn't aware that that car was coming so not the easiest.

Q: Max, congratulations on third place. How satisfying is it for you to split the Mercedes this afternoon?

MV: Well, just in general, I think our whole weekend, the performance has been a lot better. Before we came here I was actually not really looking forward to it, to qualifying, because I knew that it was going to be hard – but actually with the new updates we've got to the car, I think yeah, we gained a bit of performance and I was really happy with the car throughout qualifying and I think in the corners as well, we looked very competitive. We do know that we are lacking quite a bit of pace to Ferrari and even to Mercedes of course on the straights but knowing this is not a great track for us, it's still a great result in qualifying.

Q: And there's a huge amount of support for you this weekend. What's it like to have a Mexican wave follow you around the race track.

MV: Yeah. It's a Dutch wave but OK! It's good. It's bringing a big smile to my face, of course. I mean, it's not giving me extra lap-time unfortunately. It's a good motivation to have and I can't wait for tomorrow.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – motorsport-total.com) Lewis, just how much to you think the drag is around this track in qualifying and do you think there can even be a benefit for you tomorrow at the start, considering you're behind Charles?

LH: The drag? Oh, the slipstream. I've not really been behind the other cars. In Montreal you saw just how difficult it is to follow a Ferrari, even in the slipstream they tend to pull away. I think the little bit of an advantage they have is a little bit different in qualifying compared to the race – but yeah, I don't even know if I'll be starting where I am now, so we'll wait and see.

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) Charles, there seems to be something about you and these tracks with big braking points into slow corners. Is there something about your style that helps you in these? You've had an advantage over Seb all weekend it seems.

CL: Overall, as I said in Paul Ricard, I've changed a little bit the approach from Paul Ricard and I really felt I did a step forward. Then, Austria is also my favourite track, so it might fit a little bit better to my driving style but overall, I think, since Paul Ricard, I did a step forward. And I can feel it in car so, happy with this. Yeah, that's it.

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) To Charles and Max. All the attention for Ferrari is often on the straight line speed – but you had a really strong performance in the middle sector and at the end. Have you added a bit more downforce to the set-up this weekend to target the corners? And to Max, you talked about having a little bit updated, stronger car performance here. How much better has it been behind the wheel this weekend?

CL: I think our main issue in the last few grand prix was the front. We didn't have enough front. I think this weekend it was quite a bit better. We tried different set-ups also, set-up philosophy, and it seems to be a bit better. So, it doesn't mean that we'll do a big step-up for the other races but for here it worked pretty well. I think the most time gained on the second sector is because of a stronger front compared to the last grand prix.

Max?

MV: Yeah. I think the things we bought, they just gave me more grip in general. I didn't really have big problems before with a lot of oversteer or a lot of understeer, just not a lot of overall grip. I think that seems to be improved again. That's very positive.

Q: (Maria Reyer – motorsport-total.com) Question to Charles, we saw you using the Soft tyre in Q2, so you're starting on Soft and the Mercedes on the Medium. Why did you use the Soft tyre there?

CL: Well, we did some analysis after FP2, like every team does after the race simulation, and the Soft looked pretty good so we are pretty happy with our strategy. Definitely different than Red Bull and Mercedes but yeah, only tomorrow will tell who is right to so that choice but I'm happy with it.

Q: (Péter Vámosi – Racing Line) Question to Lewis and Max. Silly season 2020 is opened now. Can you imagine that you both can be team-mates next year?

LH: People are always making up stuff. It's the first I've heard of it. I think the team's pretty happy with Valtteri and me. So I do know Max is definitely interested in opportunities. I don't know, maybe. If there is, then great. I don't mind driving with you. I'll drive against whoever.

MV: I guess there's people who know more than me!

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / Speed Sport) Charles, was the team keeping you informed of what was wrong with Seb's car and were there any concerns about your car?

CL: Yes, I was informed. Not exactly what happened – because I don't know yet – but I was informed he had some issues with the car. They didn't feel concern on my side. I don't think they were – maybe they were behind the computers but they weren't showing it to me. So no, I don't think so.

Q: (Carlo Platella – F1ingenerale.com) Charles, this is your second pole position; are you going to approach the race in a different way from Bahrain?

CL: No, I think my approach to the race itself didn't change much from the beginning of the season. I did a change of approach for qualifying but not so much for the race. And for now I'm pretty happy with it so no.

Q: (Andrew Benson – BBC Sport) Slipstreaming is obviously becoming a huge issue in qualifying with these cars with extra drag. It's kind of funny to hear you talking about it all the time over the radio, particularly you Lewis. Today we heard loads from you. What do you think about that? Do you think slipstreaming should be such an important part of setting the fastest lap time in qualifying?

LH: For us it's because we're slow on the straights and they're fast so we need to regain it somewhere but they do it IndyCar. It's not everywhere. Most places we don't use slipstreaming, but there are places like this, Monza with long straights where it's beneficial. I think that's just another element that comes into it. I don't think it should be a problem, personally.

CL: Yeah, same opinion. I think it's always a compromise. It depends on the track, what you gain on the straight on some tracks you lose even more in the corners but here it's not the case, we just win more on the straight by taking a slipstream so that's why there was quite a bit of fight to try and have the best slipstream. Actually the last lap was pretty tricky because there was a train of cars. The only thing is that I feel that some cars - not of the top cars - but in the last lap they were slowing down unnecessarily. They had quite a big gap in front and that creates quite a problem for the cars behind but apart from that I think it's part of racing.

MV: Yeah, not much more to add.

Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Charles, you talked about your change of approach in regards to qualifying from Paul Ricard. Could you talk a little bit more about what exactly you have approached with your approach and do you think that adjustment is the biggest thing you've learned so far this year with Ferrari?

CL: Well as I've explained, just to be a little more step-by-step during the qualifying sessions. I probably over-pushed and then on the set-up side try to anticipate the track evolution which is quite a big factor now in Formula One, so just these two and I certainly found quite a bit of time.

Q: (Peter Hlawicka – F1News.cz) Lewis, how big an advantage is it to start on mediums and how confident are you that you can win tomorrow?

LH: If we get to start the race in the positions... if I get to start the race with those guys I think it will be quite a fun race. This is a track that you can follow a little a bit more but still it will be quite difficult at the top between the few of us. I think the Ferraris are particularly very quick on the long runs, not only on the short runs so it will not be so easy to keep up with Charles but I gave it everything I had. If I can stay in the tow, for example and be there – if we're on a different tyre, maybe we will be able to offset each other. Them starting on that tyre would tend to think they are going for a two (stop race) most likely unless that tyre goes a lot further than we anticipate. I don't have the numbers but on the medium tyre hopefully we will be able to go longer. I think a one and two (stop race) are very close so how you work them, safety cars and all those different things, it will be interesting but at least it makes it interesting hopefully.

Q: (Daniel Majer – GPHirek.hu) Lewis, now that you are leading the championship, tomorrow there is going to be a head-to-head battle between those other two guys. Will you consider that now you are leading the championship and it's not necessary to beat them, it would be good if you finish on the podium or you will fight as it would be the first or the last race of the season?

LH: You've not been here too long, hunh? You don't know me. Those of you who know me well, know me slightly better. I would say no, of course. I try to have a balanced approach between aggression and conservative and of course I will be pushing for the win tomorrow, that's ultimately always the goal and it should be nothing more and nothing less. As I said, it's not going to be easy to get close to be passing the Ferraris. I think they've been very very quick all weekend but of course I will be giving it absolutely everything. I don't like ever settling for anything but first. Have you seen Talladega Nights?

MV: It's good, I like it.

LH: Very good viewing. So that (inaudible).

CL: Haven't seen it.

LH: You need to watch it.

Q: (Bart Pooijeweert - Nu.nl) Max, yesterday Helmut Marko confirmed there is an escape clause in your contract. Can you tell the details about it?

MV: What do you think, my friend? Of course not! Why would I? I know, but I don't care.

Ends