



Press Information

2019 Austrian Grand Prix Sunday Press Conference Transcript 30.06.2019

DRIVERS

1 – Max VERSTAPPEN (Red Bull Racing)

2 – Charles LECLERC (Ferrari)

3 – Valtteri BOTTAS (Mercedes)

TRACK INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Martin Brundle)

Q: Max Verstappen, what an astonishing race you drove. We see two cars down there from the great Niki Lauda – a Ferrari and a McLaren. A worthy champion of course, three times, a legend in this country, who we recently lost. You and Charles did him proud during that grand prix, congratulations.

Max VERSTAPPEN: Thank you. Wow! After that start I thought the race was over. But we just kept pushing hard. Quite quickly I saw the pace was actually not too bad, but I had quite a bad flat spot on my first [set of] tyres. And then after the pit stop we were flying. You can see it now on the straight we had good pace as well so we could make the pass. Of course extremely happy for the whole team and also for Honda. We just started working together this year but to win here is incredible.

Q: It got a little bit cosy, a little bit close during the overtake of Charles. It's under investigations. I'm sure you've been told by the team. What's your point of view on that?

MV: It's hard racing. Otherwise we have to stay home.

Q: So you're really comfortable. Your elbows are out, you took the place and you were up the inside.

MV: Well, I mean, if those things aren't allowed in racing, then what's the point of being in Formula One.

Q: Well, let's just celebrate a magnificent drive, well done. Charles Leclerc I thought your first win was there; so did you I'm sure. Take us through it from your point of view. Perfect start, perfect race until the closing stages.

Charles LECLERC: Yeah, overall I thought the race was good. At the end I had a bit more degradation than I thought so Max came back. Then, on the incident, I'll let the stewards decide. For me it was pretty clear in the car, I don't know how it looked like from the outside. We'll see what the decision is.

Q: You don't feel it was a fair pass?

CL: I don't know. I was the outside, just like the lap before. Actually, the lap before was completely fine. He left a space for a car width on the exit of the corner but he didn't on the other lap, so we touched and then obviously I didn't have a chance to pass back. It's a shame.

Q: Incredible performance still, congratulations. Valtteri, a couple of 21-year-olds today putting on a stunning performance. You're the top Mercedes man, was it a difficult race?

Valtteri BOTTAS: I think we made the most out of it. It was a bit more difficult than we expected, especially with the overheating of the engine, so couldn't really race properly – had to manage all those temperatures. That's why defending was difficult and also attacking. But, yeah, got some good points. It was one of those weekends, but it's not bad.

Q: Anything you could have done better? The start was reasonable, pace was reasonable but you couldn't stay with those two.

VB: On pure race pace I don't think there was not much difference, but once we had to start to manage the temperatures we were dropping back, so...

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q: Well Max, many congratulations. A great race from you although you didn't make it easy for yourself, dropping back to seventh at the start. First question: how does this win compare to the ones that came before?

MV: It's a bit different again. At the start I had anti-stall. So I guess we set the clutch a bit too aggressive. But yeah, from there onwards, I think my first stint was a little bit limited with the flat-spot I had after lap one – but still, we stayed out quite long and, once we came out again, we had great pace initially. I think we were looking after the tyres a bit, just settling in. Then, one-by-one we were overtaking the cars ahead. The car really came alive.

Q: At what point of the race did you think the win was on?

MV: Difficult to say. I think once I got past Valtteri, with the pace we had, I could definitely have a go at it. But you never know. I just kept pushing really hard – but we did it with a few laps to go so, of course, extremely happy but also to the team. I think all weekend we've been working really well and the upgrades we bought, they've worked really well, so a big thank you to Red Bull Racing themselves, all the boys there

– but also to Honda because it's not been easy for them in the past but today it's been incredible, so I'm very happy for them.

Q: Charles, the disappointment must still feel very fresh for you. Can you just give us your thoughts on the weekend as a whole and what positives you can take away from this Austrian Grand Prix.

CL: Yeah, the weekend was positive. Quali was positive, the race though, I feel like we missed something. Quite a lot of degradation again on the second set. So yeah, on that we need to work but overall a positive weekend.

Q: And what about your performance of your car in race conditions versus qualifying. Were you expecting a little more from it?

CL: Maybe a little bit. I think what we didn't expect is Max going that long in the first stint, and then the second stint was harder because we pitted quite early onto the Hard compound.

Q: Valtteri, you celebrate your 50th start for Mercedes with another podium. Great start from you. Did that lay the foundations of this third place?

VB: Yeah, obviously the start was important because, I think, for us to attack any cars ahead was quite difficult today with the overheating issues we had, so had to do big amounts of lift and coast and couldn't actually use any of the better engine modes in the race so everything was on safe mode, just by overheating. Felt like we couldn't really race today, so it was nice to have a good track position in the beginning and actually, in the circumstances today, I'm happy that I managed to be on the podium and also get a few points against Lewis.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Scott Mitchell – Autosport) Max and Charles, obviously you went side-by-side with each other two laps in a row. Max can you just talk us through how the attack the second time was different, what you did differently? And Charles, do you think that when you did make the contact, you could have done anything yourself to avoid a collision?

MV: I think the second one I braked a bit deeper into the corner. We had a little contact of course, mid to exit of the corner but yeah, from my side I think it's racing. We all know there is a crest in that corner as well. If you take the crest wrong – because we both went a bit straight on – at one point you run out of room but it's hard racing, it's better than just following each other and have a boring race, isn't it?

CL: Yeah, I did the same thing from the first to the second lap. The only thing that changed was on the second lap there was contact and then I had to go wide and I lost quite a bit of time there.

Q: (Christian Menath – MotorsportMagazin.com) Charles, just following that, could you have done anything to avoid the contact, probably go a bit wider and then come onto the next straight a bit deeper or anything like that?

CL: As I said, I've done exactly the same thing from the first to second lap, so I did not expect any contact on the second lap. Yeah, as Max said, I think he braked a little bit

deeper. I don't know if he lost it or not but then there was the contact. I felt I was quite strong in traction, from the first attempt I managed to have a better traction and I kept my position. On the second one I couldn't do that because I was off track.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Valtteri, you mentioned the overheating issues but it was clear that the car was also being aerodynamically compromised to improve that situation. Was the team surprised that even with all those openings for cooling there were still overheating issues?

VB: The issues today were definitely bigger than we expected. We knew it was going to be difficult and we would have to do some lift and coast but we never expected we would have to do that big amount and also by not being able to use good engine modes it made quite a big difference. And on top of that there were the aero losses and we were fully open with everything, so quite big losses and aero-wise as well, but the bigger thing was the engine power and the lift and coast.

Q: (Luke Smith – Crash.net) Max, congratulations on your win, how significant do you feel this is for the Red Bull Honda project going forward and I guess the validation of the faith that Red Bull have shown in the Honda project so far?

MV: Yeah, of course I think this is very important for us and also for the future, for Honda as well. I'm just very happy that it happened today and it just gives us a lot of confidence as well to the boys and maybe a few doubts are going away because of it so yeah, at the moment it's an amazing feeling.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Max, did you have the time to enjoy the ambiance of the orange army? Did you hear it during the race or at the end?

MV: I think I was a little bit too busy myself, driving, but I could see them going up, like cheering me on. I was watching a little bit, next to the track. You can't miss the orange but of course the in-lap, you see everybody going wild so yeah, I don't know, it just gives me a lot of positive energy going into a Sunday like this, and of course after the start I was disappointed but we never gave up and of course then to come back like this is amazing.

Q: (Peter Hlawiczka – F1News.cz) Valtteri, have you already seen the incident from Charles and Max? And what is your opinion, would you penalise it or was it just a racing incident?

VB: I have not seen anything of the race apart from my own race so I can't say anything. I've seen nothing.

Q: (Christian Nimmervoll – motorsport-total.com) Charles, do you feel like this one has been stolen from you?

CL: Umm, well I think overall Red Bull was very quick today, very good at keeping the tyres better than us. If I feel the overtake was done rightly? I don't think the second one was but I believe that anyway the end would have probably been the same but it's just not the way you overtake, I think.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboEsporte.com) Max, on lap number 55 we heard 'I'm losing power, guys' and suddenly you overtake Valtteri. What does it mean?

MV: Yeah, the radio is always a bit late, so it's maybe one or two laps later, because I had one attempt running towards Valtteri and then suddenly I lost power so I had to do a few changes on the steering wheel and then I was fine again.

Q: (Peter Vamosi – RacingLine.hu) Juan Pablo Montoya said yesterday that he wanted to be a race steward; are you happy with that?

MV: I think he was quite a hard racer himself so I would definitely support him being a steward. I think he would be my mate.

CL: I think it's always good to have ex-drivers as stewards, as mentioned during the press conference on Thursday. Yeah, I believe that they probably know how it feels to be in the car and what it's like to push on the limit and when it's wanted or not wanted so yes.

VB: Yeah, I think it's good to have drivers' view. He was a good hard racer as well so...

Q: (Arjan Shouten – AD Sportworld) Max, sixth win of your car; can you compare this one with the other five because it's the first one with a new engine, the drama at the start. Does it feel any better?

MV: It's always a different feeling, I think, especially coming back from P7 or whatever it was. Of course also the new partnership with Honda. At the moment I'm just really happy for them especially.

Q: (Zsolt Godina – Favilag.hu) Charles, what are your expectations for the next races in terms of car performance and tyre performance after this weekend?

CL: I still expect Mercedes to be very very strong in the next few races. It seems that Red Bull also have a very good package, especially in the race, to keep the tyres and push on them, so yeah, we need to work. I still believe that we also did a step, especially in qualifying. I don't think we are yet at the level of Mercedes but yeah, hopefully we are getting closer.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – La Corriera della Sera) Charles, looking back at the choice of the soft tyres to start, was it the right one in your opinion or not?

CL: I think it was because I knew that starting on medium wouldn't have changed anything. We didn't stop because my softs were dead but we stopped because Valtteri stopped and we had to protect (ourselves) from him. So yeah, I would have stopped also on the medium I think, just to keep that track position.

Q: (Luis Vasconcelos – Formula Press) Max and Charles, was turn three the only place where you thought you could attack Charles and Charles, was that the only place where you were concerned and keeping an eye on him?

MV: Depends how it ends up. If he closes the door fully into three then you try to get him out of three into four, that's what I did with Seb, for example so it just depends how the car ahead of you is defending.

CL: Yeah, and for me I think there are two places where you overtake on this track which is turn three and turn four or where you overtake mostly so I was aware that he was coming very very quickly so checking but these two places, I knew that if he had the opportunity or if he was getting closer, I believe that it was here that he would have tried.

Q: (Jukic Velimir Veljko – Autofocus) Mr Charles, you have been known up to now as a gentle, nice, polite driver. After this overtaking would you adapt your style more Max's way, more tough, more aggressive?

CL: Which overtake? I got overtaken but yeah, I'm always like this. I think outside the car I'm a bit of a different person than what I am in the car but yeah, that's it.

Ends