



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2014 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix Sunday Race Press Conference Transcript 23.11.2014

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PODIUM INTERVIEWS

(Conducted by Martin Brundle)

Lewis, you did it. We saw the emotion on your face now when they were playing your national anthem. Can you try to put that into words for us, just how much this means to you?

Lewis HAMILTON: I'm a bit lost for words really. I think one thing I want to say is a big, huge thank you to all the fans coming out all this way, all the flags, all the caps, everything, it made such a difference this weekend. Also to my family, thank you guys, thank you so much for coming, I really, really do appreciate it. My mum back home. And my team, who throughout the year did an incredible job and without them I wouldn't be here today. I can't really explain how much this means. It means even more than the first one. It feels like it's the first time. I feel so blessed.

Wow. Tell us about the race a little bit, what a start you had to the grand prix!

LH: Yeah! That's my guy down here, giving me a good start. It was like a rocket! It was probably the best start I ever had. I knew from then on, straightaway, that I was in the lead. Obviously going into the race I had a couple of different options of how to approach the race. If I was behind then we'd see how it goes until the first stop but if I was ahead I knew I had to really, really race. The car was fantastic, we really got it spot on for the race. Obviously qualifying wasn't perfect but we got it ready for the race and that's what's most important.

And then you heard on the radio: 'Nico has a problem'. What were your thoughts then?

LH: You know Nico put on an incredible fight throughout the year. He was a phenomenal competitor. We met each other back in 1997 and we always said it would be amazing to be racing in the same team and he did an amazing job today and very sad obviously to know that his car wasn't quick enough that we can fight in the end but still he was graceful enough to come up to me just now.

Do you mind sharing with us what you said to each other after such an intense season? It's been a bit difficult from time to time between you, especially at Spa, and we saw you having words together.

LH: He just come into the room just now, very, very professional, and I just said fantastic. He said 'you drove really well'. And the same to him, all year long he drove incredibly well, especially in qualifying, so hat off to him.

But there was a little man who kept you very honest through that grand prix, kept you on your toes, you had to keep some pace up towards the end and that was Felipe Massa. Felipe, I don't know about your but I'm thinking about 2008, when you were on the podium, the last time you won a grand prix, you must have thought I've got a chance to win again today, and this man took the championship off you a few seconds after you crossed the line. But what a race for you?

Felipe MASSA: First of all, thank you everybody. Lewis, well done, congratulations, because you deserve it, you did a fantastic championship, your team, so congratulations really. Yeah, it was an incredible race for us. I didn't expect to have that pace and I didn't expect... we were slightly slower than Mercedes but not so much on the same tyres and then I was able to keep the tyres until, not the end, but until a long part of the race and then we were talking to the team.

We tried the option, yes, why not, I mean we are here, we have a big gap to the car behind, which was Valtteri, so let's try. We try. Unfortunately, Lewis was a little bit too far but I wanted so much that victory. We were close and I hope that's just the beginning for next year.

Was there any point where you thought 'I can win this race, I'm going to take this victory'?

FM: yeah, I think, you know when it was 10 laps to go I was a little bit more than a second quicker per laps I said 'if these tyres stay like that then I can win the race' but definitely the tyres were degrading a little bit, especially that I was on the option. In the last four laps I didn't have enough, a gap any more compared to him to catch like I was catching before. But I think it was a fantastic job for the team. I'm so proud to be on this team, so really, really, thank you guys. You are really in my heart and I'm so proud to be racing for Williams. Really, it's just the beginning, we can do a lot more than that. Thank you guys.

Provisionally third in the world championship then, the great Williams team and a lot of thanks will go to this young man for the points that he has scored this year. He's secured fourth in the world championship as well, ahead of great drivers like Vettel and Alonso. Good to see you up here again Valtteri.

Valtteri BOTTAS: Thank you, I always like to be here. Obviously the higher the step the better it is, but I think for this season it will do for us like this. It's been an amazing year with so much improvement as a team and getting so much stronger, and this last race shows how strong we are getting. The curve is to the up. I'm expecting a lot from next year. But now I can say only that I'm really, really thankful that I can be part of this team and that I can drive this good car.

Congratulations. Final word then from Lewis. Lewis, what happens now in your life – in the next few hours, days, months?

LH: I really don't know. I'm just going to take it one day at a time. This is the greatest day of my life, as I said. It's really due to all the people around me. 2008 was a special time in my life. The feeling I have now is way, way past that and above and beyond. It's the greatest feeling ever. I'm grateful to God, I'm grateful for my car finishing and really, to everyone, thank you so much everyone. Thank you.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Lewis, many, many congratulations. You've had a little time there to collect your thoughts after the whirlwind of the race and the podium. It's been a long tough season. You did it in style though, with that sensational start and a victory. How important was that to you today and what was the turning point this year?

LH: It's very hard to soak all this up. When you're going through the race, when you're coming here this weekend, there's so much pressure from around you, you're just trying to ignore it, trying to keep your eye on the ball. Coming in today... Niki was right, I didn't sleep last night. I went to bed at about 1am and woke up at like 5am this morning and I went for a run this morning and a massage and everything and I thought for sure I'm going to be tired when it gets to the race but somehow I felt composed and my family came and surprised me at breakfast, which was really a great thing. I wanted them to be here but I just knew how intense the weekend would be and I didn't know if I was going to have time to give them any time. I didn't want to finish the day or the weekend saying 'I wish did that or I wish I did that'. This has been an incredible year. I just cannot believe how amazing this has all been. Coming to this team last year, the decision to come here, when a lot of people said it was the wrong choice. The steps we took last year and then coming into this year, it was just unbelievable and then again, as I said, the fan support has been phenomenal. I never in a million years thought I'd have that kind of support, so as I said before, this is the greatest moment in my life. It's very hard to... it feels very surreal. It feels like an out-of-body experience. I feel like I'm back here watching this going on, it's not really happening. So I'm going to really make sure I gift my thanks and count my blessings.

Very good. Felipe, a brilliant drive from you. And a similar theme really: a decision to leave Ferrari, to go to Williams, to restart your career. Give us your emotions about the way it has all turned out?

FM: Yeah, I think today was an emotional day, to see what we achieve during the whole season, the whole championship. Not just me but also the team. It's fantastic to be part of it. It's fantastic to be inside a big evolution inside a team. Definitely we lost so much points this year. It would have been completely the end of the championship if I had the normal season, the normal first half of the season that I expected but I think today it was so nice to see that we are there, we can win the race, we can fight for victory, we can fight hopefully for championships but it shows we are there, shows that we

didn't forget how to win. I think, for me, that's what counts at the end. Such a difficult time for so long, you know, and we're still there. When we had the opportunity, we're there to fight for the victory and I think that's what makes me proud and makes me happy and makes me even more motivated to carry on and to push hard every day.

Thank you. Valtteri, the start didn't really work out for you today but a brilliant recovery from there and obviously Williams a great result in the constructors' championship, you personally in the drivers' championship. Just sum up this breakthrough season for you?

VB: First of all, I'm going to say congrats to Lewis. He really deserves it. Amazing season from him and from his team, so yeah, really, really good job. From our side, yeah, my race today was compromised after the start. I had a lot of clutch slip, which was not really the first time it's happened to me, so that's one thing we really need to work on in the winter. But yeah, a little bit compromised the strategy being stuck behind other cars but you know, overall, an amazing end to the season. An amazing... from last season, it's been just incredible how much we have improved. And as a team being two cars on the podium it really shows how much we also have been improving during the season, which is the main thing, because next year things are going to be really tricky, everybody is going to improve and we are really aiming to be again stronger and fighting for the wins. All I can say now is that I'm really happy to be part of this team now, because we are really on the up and from us and from my side there is definitely more to come for the future, so looking forward.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Nahed Sayouh – Autosport Middle East) Lewis, now you have won the championship with Mercedes, will this boost your chances to renew your contract and stay with the team beyond 2015, or make you look for another new challenge?

LH: I definitely don't feel that I'm looking for a new challenge. As I said when I joined this team, I wanted to be a part of something that was building and growing and knew success like the team hadn't really had before. And so I feel like this is just the beginning. We still have another year to go, so there's no particular rush but this is my home. I feel very happy here. And obviously the team did a mega job, so I'm forever grateful for them.

Q: (Martin Samuel – Daily Mail) Lewis, forgive my ignorance on this, a start like that that you got today, a phenomenal start, how much of that is technical and how much of it is human? How much of it is the athlete?

LH: The car... very little is the athlete. Obviously we have a sequence that we have to go through and we have to perform at the right time, making sure that you prepare the clutch throughout the weekend, prepare your tyres when you get to your spot. I would very closely with the engineer who works with my clutch. He came to my room before the race and asked "how do you want to approach this." I said: "the same as every time. We don't need to do any more or any less." When the start goes, when you do the formation lap, you get a feel for how good the clutch is at that point. You have to guide them or give them feedback whether you need more torque or more slip. Anyways, we hit is spot on. The second part, when you let out the second part and you feed the throttle, that's when the driver comes it. But it was for sure... it felt like the best start I've ever had. Absolutely phenomenal.

Q: (Rodrigo Franca – VIP Magazine) Question to Lewis and Felipe. I would like you to comment on the best thing in the season for you: the best race or the best dual you have on the track? And the worst part of the season? The moment you guys think was the worst moment of the season, in the battle of the championship for Lewis and for Felipe, in the battle of him with Valtteri in the Williams.

LH: I think firstly I really want to say a big congratulations to these guys. They've been doing an incredible job this year. And to see... growing up watching Williams at the front, to see them back up there I think is fantastic. I'm really happy for Sir Frank and the team and very much looking forward to fighting them in the future. They've been driving exceptional well this year and to be back up here with Felipe after our great history of many, many years ago, it's really good to see him up here still and a fighting force. Highs and lows of the year: Spa was a low, the lowest point. This is the highest. By a long, long, long way. I said coming into this weekend that I wouldn't change the season, the way it's gone, for anything really because I've learnt a lot. If anything, I felt very, very strong with the way I came out of the good and the bad. Obviously coming to the last race, knowing it's double points, which... jeez... do you think it was a good idea? Didn't feel like a good idea when we came into it. I'll take the points though...

FM: I thought it was a bad idea in 2008...

LH: You needed the double points then! But yeah, exceptional race.

FM: I think, to be honest, I had the best podiums of the season. Being on the podium in Italy after so long, was fantastic to see the people there screaming my name and being so happy that I was there on the podium – but I would say the best was Brazil. To be at home in the podium, to have your people, they are really supporting you, I think it was such incredible energy. But I would say that maybe the best race of the season was here. It was really a strong race I had today and I think that it was maybe the best race of the season. The worst: when I crashed on the last lap in Canada. I thought it was going to hurt. That one. The other, in Germany as well, maybe were the worst races.

Q: (Sana Bergesh – Tempo Magazine) I'm going to ask the local question. The UAE loves welcoming the Formula One and all these amazing drivers here year after year. I want to know, after the race, where do you go in the UAE. What are your favourite things to do while you are here? How do you unwind after a race like this?

LH: Firstly, I love coming here every year, the fifth year of coming to this race. Every year it's without doubt one of the best grands prix if not the best grand prix in terms of the whole atmosphere. A lot of the Brits came over here, they get to enjoy a holiday at the same time because it's such a beautiful, peaceful place. I went for a run by the water today, the last time I won I went jet-skiing because it's so nice on the water here. But afterwards... I have no idea what I'm going to do tonight. I've got to try to absorb this bit-by-bit. As I said, my family's here, so definitely going to have a nice dinner with them. And I think I'll have a drink tonight.

Q: (Phillip Merrell – AMEinfo.com) Lewis, after winning today, what's your message to your fans, after winning this championship?

LH: My message to my fans... I always say we win and we lose together. This weekend I had my guy who does my website put together a collage of different clips of messages from people. And I really didn't know what to expect when I got it. I got it and there's something happening in my heart. I can't really explain it. The love and positive energy that I get from my fans and the support through thick and thin, y'know through the good and the bad, they've been there. So big thank you to them. They really helped me get through

the bad moments and make it even more special being at the top. Seeing them out there today, all the flags, the caps, it really made me believe that I can do anything. So big thank you to them.

Q: (Saher Soukar – Saneou Al Hadath) Lewis, you told us yesterday that you felt you were a lot wiser coming into this race, as opposed to 2008. How did the emotions compare – and why is this moment the greatest moment of your life or career?

LH: Well, 2007 was a very bad experience, obviously losing the championship I fell to a low that I couldn't control and 2008 came back, fighting in the championship, Felipe won the race, won the championship for a second and then obviously what happened in the last corner, I got it back and for me I'd lost it, won it, lost it and, whilst it was a great experience, my emotions were shot. I don't know, that year, I was just immature. I didn't have the knowledge that I have now. Didn't approach the race the same as I did today. Today I went in... normally you go in butterflies in the stomach, a bit nervous, today I was going into the race thinking 'I feel extremely calm', which is really weird. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Obviously it was a really good thing. Last night sitting there thinking, Jeez, tomorrow is the day. We could go into the race, something could happen to the car and that would be the championship done. Naturally just thinking of all the negative things possible, y'know? And working really hard to bring the positives into it. I brought that today. I think really that knowledge and experience got me through the race today. Looking after the car. Battling to the point where I'd got the championship in a good position and then, obviously it helped that Nico's car was not performing properly so, when he fell out of the points, I knew that I could fight with Felipe and... yeah... that was the most fulfilling experience I have to say.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, congratulations for the good result, summarizing this season, do you feel you could have been the best of the rest behind the Mercedes in the drivers' championship also?

VB: Yeah. I think obviously if we look back over the season there were, especially at the beginning of the season, many races where we maybe didn't get everything out of the pace what we really had in the races. It's been just a process, getting better as a team, as there was a long way to come to this point from last season. So I think, yeah, if you look back, yeah, possibly could have been fighting for second place. Now the season is finished, every time we've made some mistakes we've learned from them and that's the main thing. We're just going to make sure we don't repeat any same mistakes next year.

I'm sure we'll be fighting for a better position. But third in the constructors', for me fourth in the drivers', it will do for now. But for the future, it's not enough.

Q: (Nawied Jabarkhyl – Gulf News Broadcasting) Lewis, coming into this weekend, there was a lot of talk about your personal relationship with Nico Rosberg. Now that it's all over, how are you going to take that forward and the history that you have, what's your relationship going to be like going forward. What's your thoughts on it?

LH: I think it's been so intense between us all year long. There's been good moments and bad moments. Without a doubt we've had a friendship or a relationship that we built a long, long, long time ago, so that will always be there. He was a very, very fierce competitor this year, he did an exceptional job. He's going to be quick for a long time. I've got to pick up my qualifying pace for next year. It could have been either one of us today. Obviously we both wanted it. But I think with our relationship, we'll continue to try to lift the team up, we'll work together as we have done all year long. Perhaps things naturally will ease up a little now. He was graceful enough to come up to me and see me after, which I really appreciated. It was really big of him to be able to do that. It's very, very tough, I know what it's like losing a championship so, for sure, we'll keep working at it.

Q: (Ali Bukar – Tempo Magazine) What I want to ask Lewis is this: it's no secret that your relationship with Nico has been terrible this year. Is this a healthy relationship in Formula One? You guys are working as teammates and yet there is a terrible relationship between both of you.

LH: It's not a terrible relationship. We've been fighting all season as I've just explained; there have been good moments and bad moments but we've worked together, professionally I think, all year long to push this team, so the team has no problems. I think we deliver to the team to the maximum.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globoesporte.com) Lewis, can you explain to us more about the turning point at Spa-Francorchamps? What happened exactly when suddenly you started winning, winning, winning – probably this is the main reason you are here, celebrating the world title?

LH: Yeah. Well, Spa was a low moment. It was a very difficult scenario to be in and going back years ago, I wouldn't have reacted the way I did this year. I would have chosen another way which

wouldn't have been a positive and I guess with age, as I said, and just maturing and having a different perspective on life, I think I handled it a different way, I really thought for the following days and really turned my focus to a different area. I came back to the next races with a slightly different approach and I won't explain exactly what I did because I need to bring it to the next races next year but I did tweak some of my approach throughout the weekend which helped me get those wins. I've still got some improvements to make, qualifying was good this year but could be better. It would make it much easier if I could get qualifying sorted because the race pace is very much there.

Inside the team? Nothing really changed, I don't believe. The team has been amazing. It's been very hard for them. They've wanted both of us to win, having to be very balanced but ultimately they've done an exceptional job. It is a great group of people in this team; there's a lot of love in this team, a lot of passion and it's been a real privilege to work with these people.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Lewis, when you heard on the radio about the ERS problems of Nico, have you been worried that it could hit you as well, knowing what happened in Montreal when both cars were affected with something like that? And have you been happy when the team told you to turn down the power for a while, knowing that it would give Felipe the opportunity to catch up?

LH: I was asking the team if I could turn down the power, because I realised, when the gap started to increase between me and Nico, I was thinking OK, I've got to back off, got to look after the tyres so... look after the car, started avoiding kerbs, all those kind of things. No, I think... yeah, naturally I was... a couple of moments down the straight I was rubbing the cockpit, I was saying 'come on baby, we can make it. Stick with me.' I really did. You won't see it but I did. Several times. Do you ever do that?

FM: Yeah, I did.

LH: You know, rubbing the cockpit. 'Come on baby, just don't... we can make it.' So I did that a few times but no, to be honest, I had complete faith that things were going to go the right way today but of course, you never know. But the car was feeling good and ultimately at the end I was able to push, I wanted to win the race, I wanted to have that battle with Felipe. He obviously came in for those tyres and

I thought Jeez, he's going to catch and get the win, but managed to just keep him behind me.

Q: (Anthony Rowlinson - F1 Racing) Lewis, congratulations, you're a multiple British World Champion, joining the likes of Jackie Stewart and Graham Hill. What do you think you can go on to achieve now? You've got a fantastic team and car and obviously in great form. Do you think this could be the start of a Lewis Hamilton era?

LH: I don't know. This really is something incredibly special, what this team has put together and I think we've got great people in their right positions and me and Nico will continue to push the team forward, as will the boss of Mercedes who have been so committed and building the best engine. These guys know just as much as I do, it's been phenomenal this year. I think it's really important the steps we take moving forwards to continue improving and I 100 percent believe the team will do that. I'm looking forward to battling with people for sure but I do believe that we'll be there fighting with people hopefully for some time.

Q: (Ben Hunt – The Sun) Lewis, congratulations, just your reaction please: Prince Harry's called you a legend over the radio, you're now 10-1 to be knighted at the end of the year as well, the reaction to that please, and also on a serious note, what sort of calming influence has the Missus turning up had, and your Dad and your family. Just wondered how much that helped your mind? We knew you were a little bit edgy at the start of the week and just wondered if that did have an effect?

LH: At the start of the week, I wasn't edgy; at the start of the week I was feeling really good coming here. I genuinely felt, when you saw me coming here on Thursday, I really did feel relaxed, practice was generally going well and qualifying was a little bit tougher and the pressure was increasing. I was messaging with my Dad last night and I went out to the beach and I was messaging with him and I said 'guys I would love you to be here but just know I'm here just working away. I'm not out having dinner or all these different things. I'm trying to make you proud.' Anyways, he turned up in the morning. He must have been at the airport while he was doing it. I think I was so focused this morning that it wasn't... when they came to surprise me, I wasn't that shocked or anything like that. I took it in my step but naturally, my family are the ones that got me into racing, they're the ones that sacrificed everything to get me to where I am today. Who you see today is because of them, so a reflection of them, so being here without them didn't feel right, naturally, because they

have every right to be here to enjoy it with me, so I'm just grateful they were there. My Mum is at home, she wanted to come as well. I've got a big family but obviously I can't please everyone but I'm sure she'll come to many races next year.

Q: (Bob Constanduros) Lewis, you've spoken a little bit about the part that Ross Brawn played in you entering this team. He's having a bit of a significant birthday today, I don't know if you know that. What sort of message have you got for him?

LH: Yeah, I mean to Ross, to Norbert Haug, to Niki, to Dieter, to all the board members, the belief that they've had in me, particularly when I got into Formula One... I signed with McLaren and then Ron and Norbert gave the go-ahead for me to get the seat. Coming in to this team, as I said to you, Ross really sold it to me. He came with his laptop, sat and had tea with me which was just surreal to see because I've been watching TV for years, seeing the success that he had, thinking 'oh my God, Ross, he wants me. Before he wanted Michael and now he wants me' which is a very strange situation to be in and I'm forever grateful. I wish him a huge happy birthday. He invited me, obviously I'm here so can't go but I will definitely probably speak to him later today but I'm really grateful for him wanting me to be in the team and the other members really being so supportive to being in this team because they wanted to win and it felt that I would be a perfect fit. I think we've proved that he was right.

Q: (Leigh O'Gorman – Walker Watson) To all three of you: even though it was a dusk race, could you give an indication of how your general car balance felt through the changing temperatures, tyre-wear etc?

FM: Well, I think it's very easy. We just want to answer. The car balance changed completely through the temperature so during the day, during the evening. Normally during the evening the tyres behaved a lot better so you can use the tyres on more laps so degradation is lower, even if it was not so low but it's lower so lap times quicker so I think there's a big difference between driving in the day and driving in the evening.

VB: Yeah, I agree with Felipe, it's quite a big difference because we started in what was still slightly sunlight and then it gets really dark, the temperature really drops so every tyre set you put on is going to behave slightly differently. Luckily, we have quite a few tools on the steering wheel which we can really help the balance of the car, so that helps.

LH: I think they've answered it pretty well. It was the same for me.

Q: (Haoran Zhou – F1 Express) Lewis, you have just been nominated for Sports Personality of the Year; do you think you have a chance of winning that?

LH: I'm more hoping that I get to go and see the Queen again!

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