



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

Press Information

2014 German Grand Prix Thursday Press Conference Transcript 17.07.2014

DRIVERS – Nico HULKENBERG (Force India), Kevin MAGNUSSEN (McLaren), Adrian SUTIL (Sauber), Kimi RAIKKONEN (Ferrari), Sebastian VETTEL (Red Bull Racing), Nico ROSBERG (Mercedes)

PRESS CONFERENCE

Nico Hulkenberg, if we could start with you. Points in every race so far this season, only you and [Fernando] Alonso have managed that so far and you're seven to two against your team-mate in qualifying. How positive is that for you and how do you think that is perceived within the Formula One paddock?

Nico HULKENBERG: I think it's very positive in general. I think it's a very good achievement to have scored points in every race – probably Nico and Lewis would have been the same without the technical failures. I think it has been a very positive start to the season, first half, many, many points, much better than we expected going into the season and I think that is also the perception of the paddock. However, we're only in the middle of the season and there's still a long way to go before the end and our aim is to get the fourth position in the Constructors' Championship. We have a big challenge on our hands there against Williams, McLaren and many others. I look forward to that.

You've largely been fighting for fifth and sixth places in races this season but just recently, the last couple of races, it was more like eight and ninth. What brought about that change and where do you think you'll be fighting this weekend?

NH: I think Silverstone was overall a bit difficult for us. The track didn't suit us so well, plus the conditions made it even more difficult. Therefore, it was still a very good achievement to get points on the board there. In Austria we were a bit compromised by a few issues, which we found out after the race, otherwise that could have been better. So hopefully here we'll be back to bigger points but it's difficult to know. Obviously

it's very hot this weekend, so it will be interesting to see how the tyres behave and who will manage it the best.

Kevin, coming to you, points in the last four grands prix for you, six points finishes in total this season with one podium but McLaren still seem to be quite up and down dependent on circuit, why is that?

Kevin MAGNUSSEN: It's difficult... it's a good question. It's something we don't really quite understand 100 per cent, but surely it has a lot to do with tyres, they behave quite differently race to race. I think we are improving, the car is improving, we're putting downforce on the car at nearly every race so I think we're moving in a positive direction.

We're coming up to the summer break and there's a lot of talk about the driver market – as there always is at this point. Where do you think you stand with regard to staying at McLaren next season.

KM: I can only do my best and hope that is good enough. Anyone at McLaren should feel that you have to deliver to your best to deserve to be there and that goes for me and Jenson as well.

Kimi, the first question has to be how are you feeling after your accident at Silverstone, any after-effects and what happened?

Kimi RAIKKONEN: Well, I crashed, I guess you saw it. No, I had some pain but it's all fine.

Just in your leg?

KR: No actually it was in my ribs the most, that's why I didn't do the test, but it's all gone away now.

You're 100 per cent now?

KR: Yeah.

Many things have not gone the way you expected them to this season in your rejoining Ferrari, but can you tell us what has gone the way you've expected it and what positives you've drawn so far?

KR: We've been in every race at least. That's what you expect at least. It's been a difficult year, hopefully it will turn around at some point – it must, it cannot go much longer like this, it's not fun. But this kind of thing has happened to me before and we always managed to turn it around, so I have a strong belief it will turn around. We have

to just fix issues and get things as I want and I'm sure we can be back where we should be.

Nico, coming to you: a new contract extension with Mercedes, congratulations on that, you also got married since we last saw you, but you've never been on the podium in Germany, I see from your record, so I guess that's this weekend's first objective. You're still on top of the championship, just four points clear, but your team-mate Lewis Hamilton said that this is a 'reset moment' in the title race and that he's been on the back foot all season. How do you see it?

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, it's been a very exciting week for sure. We also became world champions, which was awesome. In terms of the championship, how do I see it? I just see it as the next race, which is Hockenheim. It's our home race. I really look forward to driving here. I'm here to win, of course. I'm here to try to extend the championship leads. That's where it ends for me. I'm really just looking at the moment, taking it race by race.

As you say it's been a great week for Germany on the sporting front. As a keen follower and friend of the national team is there a way you can harness some of that positivity into your challenge this weekend?

NR: The effort of the team as a whole, how they all played together and everything was really great to see and that's what won them the tournament I think, not any individual strength or anything. That's what we're trying to do as well, to really work well, everybody together, to really make the most of it. I think we're also on the right track with that, in that respect, because to dominate the sport as we are doing at the moment, I think that indicates we work pretty well together as a team and of course there's room for improvement but we're going in the right direction.

Adrian, you qualified 13th at the first race in Australia at the start of the year and 13th at Silverstone. There seems to be some continuity there. If you look at the ultimate pace of all the cars, Sauber doesn't seem to be progressing. Is that the way it's seen internally and what's the plan?

Adrian SUTIL: Yes, more or less a consistent season but also a few changes and progress of course. I think the car is a better car compared to the first races but you can't really see it in results. Nevertheless Silverstone was a bit better. You could see already in the free practice the car was a bit more competitive and also I think in qualifying in the rain we were closer to the top 10, which was good. We are still struggling sometimes with the tyres, especially with the hard compound, in the race, which slowed us down a lot. I can't really say more. Of course we want to try to improve the situation. It's not where we want to be but everyone in the factory is trying the maximum to improve that. It's not an easy situation but we're going to get out of it pretty soon.

You've said several times that stability is the problem, that the car lacks stability. Can you elaborate on that and what plans are in place to fix that?

AS: Well, the window is very small where the car operates and also the window when you are close to the limit, whether it stays on the line or is completely off – it's easy to make a mistake with this car. So you need to have a lot of confidence in the car, you need to drive and learn as much as possible about the car behaviour to feel well. It's getting better very race. But yeah, it's a little diva to control. It's just a situation like that so we try to make it more easy to drive. The stability is sometimes there, [then] you have a bit too much understeer in the other areas, so you are shifting the problem from one end to the other but it's very difficult to get rid of the problem completely so this is where we are struggling most at the moment.

Sebastian, obviously winner of the German Grand Prix last year, your first F1 win on home soil. Tell us about the feeling of racing here at home, especially with the country on such a sporting high at the moment?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, obviously last year was very special – I had been trying many times before, so it was definitely a good feeling to succeed. I think this year should be a very good weekend. Mostly good weather forecast and obviously the whole of Germany still has the German flags from the World Cup around, so it would be nice to see a lot of those on the track and get a little bit of that support as well here on the circuit.

Obviously the battle with Fernando Alonso in Silverstone was one of the highlights of this season so far. There were quite a lot of radio messages from the pair of you at the time but looking back and thinking about it now, how much did you enjoy it?

SV: Yeah, I probably enjoyed it more than I probably said after the race. I still think it took a little bit too long because obviously I lost quite a lot of time fighting him and couldn't progress to probably finish higher up. But it was definitely very tight, it's always very tight when you fight with Fernando, he's very tough to overtake, he doesn't give you a lot of room, but eventually I squeezed past, so for sure I was happy to finally overtake him on the track.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Q: (Ian Parkes – PA) Question to Nico. First of all, congratulations on becoming a married man. Secondly, you've obviously had to change your helmet design this week. You showed it off on Twitter with the World Cup on top of the helmet. I've spoken to FIFA and they've expressed their reason why you're not allowed to have the World Cup: intellectual commercial property rights and all that. You're obviously disappointed I guess, but can you understand their reasoning behind it?

NR: All the things you have to think about, it's amazing that even a trophy has its trademark or whatever, just sticking it on a helmet you know. That was a surprise but of course I fully understand. It was a pity as it looked really cool, with the trophy on top. Anyways, replaced it now with a big star and no-one can take that away. The star is ours.

Q: (Graham Keilloh – F1Plus.com) A question for all the drivers. We all recall the incident at last year's German Grand Prix with Mark Webber where a wheel fell off after a pit stop. In recent days there have been moves afoot for there to be a little bit of rowing back on the tough sanctions that were put in place following the Webber incident. I just want to know what each driver feels about more leniency for unsafe releases that may be coming in?

NH: To be honest I didn't really understand the question. I'll pass it on to Kevin.

KM: It's good if us drivers don't get points or penalties [that are] that harsh, as it's not really our fault. Of course we are a team and we should be penalised somehow together but I think it's good if it doesn't just go to the drivers.

Adrian, anything to add?

AS: No.

Kimi?

KR: No.

Sebastian, do you have a view?

SV: I think it's like going to prison for stealing a chocolate bar. I think it's too harsh for the drivers, it's more for the team. There's not much you can do as a driver, but it is what it is.

Nico?

NR: Obviously it is one of the most dangerous situations for all of the people working in the pitlane you know. So definitely it should be harsh to try to avoid people doing that or things like that happening. We need to find the best way, what sort of penalties to do.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Kimi there has been a lot of criticism around you in the past few months. Do you feel that your position in Ferrari could be threatened next year or do you feel confident that you will sort your problems and that everything is going to be OK for the future?

KR: Like I said, I'm sure we can fix them. How fast? I hope quickly but it depends on many things. I have a contract so I'm not worried about that for the future.

Q: (Abhishek Takle - Midday) A question for Sebastian. Hockenheim obviously hold some special memories for you because this is where you watched your first Friday practice session. You won the German Grand Prix at the Nurburgring. What would it mean for you to win here at Hockenheim, at some point in your career?

SV: Well, I hope I can turn things around and that we can have a good race on Sunday and a good weekend in general. But of course we are not the favourites going into the weekend but there's always a chance of winning. For sure, this circuit is very special to me because my home town is only 30 minutes from here, it's where I grew up. I also started go-karting not far from here, just around the corner, so a lot of memories. I know a lot of people that work here, so it always feels like a second home. In that regard it would be nice. So definitely a very special place for me, special memories. The first car race I did was here in 2003, so yeah, it's definitely one of the tracks I want to win at.

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos – Racing Magazine) A question for all drivers. Many teams will race without the FRIC system. Is there a feeling that this might change the gap between the teams significantly or not; that it will stay more or less the same, like it was before?

NR: Everybody has it to some extent. It's impossible to predict. For sure it can have some influence but we just need to wait and see what happens.

Sebastian?

SV: Well I said it is one of the things that obviously got banned now. I hope it brings the field closer to Mercedes but it's difficult to say. All of the teams have been playing with it to some extent. How much it has an impact? I think it has to be seen this weekend and also probably next week in Hungary. After those two races I think you can have another judgement.

Kimi, your thoughts on the FRIC suspension?

KR: Yeah, I mean it's the rule and obviously that decides if we can use it or not. It's not in our car, I don't expect it's going to be a completely different world but until we run it, the cars, and see what the other teams do, it's hard to say. I guess we'll know a bit more after this weekend.

Adrian?

AS: I think... we hope... it will be better for us, that we are closer – but very hard to say, for sure. Some, they rely more on it, some less. Let's see. After the weekend we'll be wiser.

Kevin, your thoughts.

KM: Not much to say really. We 'll try to get the best out of the car without it.

Nico?

NH: It's pretty much how Nico said, it's really hard to predict if and how much people will lose due to it. It's just a case of wait and see how much it impacts on different cars.

Q: (Koen Verhelst - Media Group Limburg) A question for all the German drivers: where did you watch the World Cup soccer finals last Sunday and, in relation to that, how to you explain the success of Germany both in Formula One at the moment and football and perhaps also in the economy?

SV: I watched in on TV at home. I wasn't there! Thank God they showed it. At home, with a couple of friends. I think the reason, it has been 24 years since we last won the World Cup. I hope that the next one doesn't take 24 years again. I think we had a very strong team for the last World Cups as well and were very close to win. It's good that we succeeded now. For the Formula One drivers, I don't think there's a particular reason. Obviously, for us, to some extent we're the generation after Michael and Michael was a big inspiration, so for sure, when Michael made Formula One really a sport in Germany and made it big a lot of fathers with their sons went to the go-kart tracks and wanted to do like him. I think it's chances, in the end, if you have a thousand kids trying rather than ten, the chances that one or two end up in Formula One are obviously a lot greater. The economy... I'm not a specialist – but I think we like to work.

Adrian?

AS: The same, I watched on TV at home. Very quiet. It was a great game, I think. Very exciting and both played very well. One minute the Germans were a bit better than the other ones and scored a goal. I think something to be very proud of. It's great to see Germany being very happy about it. So many festivals and parties after it, so really, really good. Good mood in the air, so, great also for this weekend here, for the German Grand Prix. The drivers? I think it all started back in the 90s, probably. When Michael went into Formula One there was a big boom of racing in Germany – but also a lot of car manufacturers are based in Germany, it's a very strong country for cars, for technology in general – and they're supporting young drivers from the early ages, especially BMW was involved for many years with the Formula BMW. That's where I started the racing, I think also Sebastian as well and Nico. Most of the drivers took the step and went into Formula 3. So there are clear categories where you can go.

Still, I think it's very hard to say it's a really good support because it's so expensive. When I see the number for young kids coming up into racing, in go-karts you have to spend so much money, not having a real... let's say you can't be sure that you're going to make it. So, even there. Football has a better structure behind. We could still improve it but Germany, for sure, is one of the leading countries and that's great. They're pushing it really hard.

Nico Hülkenberg, anything to add.

NH: I also watched it at home with some friends. I think we won because we had the strongest team and a great team spirit, a very clever coach. I think I agree with what Sebastian says about the drivers and why we have it strong now and the economy, I think is just German mentality and appetite to be strong in the economy.

Nico Rosberg, your thoughts.

NR: I watched it at my parents place, as is tradition in our family because my Mum is the biggest soccer fanatic in our family, so I watched it there with friends and went absolutely crazy when they scored. It was a great time. I agree with the others on the other parts.

Q: (Paolo Ianieri – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Nico, last week Lewis was putting in doubt your true nationality about being German, real German supporter – and your helmet problem proves the opposite. How big is this... the pressure that Lewis is putting on you? Are you feeling it? Is it also big the pressure to have a championship that is open now completely, and to race at home and try to win this race?

NR: On the media, I generally don't read the media, so most of the time I don't know what's going on – but this I did know about it. I really don't get into such things. Everybody's free to have his opinions, and I was there anyway and it was more or less a joke discussion, so for me it's not really relevant to discuss it in any way. Other than that, yeah, it's a great battle between us. Every race it's been us two fighting it out for the win. It's fantastic – a tough battle also – but good. I'm sure it's going to continue for a long time and it will be very close – and I look forward to the race here now in front of... it's my second home race, I have Monaco and here. I'm very fortunate in that sense, I have two home races, and look forward to all the support and I really hope to do a fantastic job. It would be a great end to already the great times I've been having recently if I could win here at the German Grand Prix.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, do you remember having any heavier shunt than you had in Silverstone?

KR: Yeah, probably I have had. Hopefully not too many more but it's just part of the thing. It hurt a little bit but quite often you can have a quite slow accident and get

badly hurt, so it's not about that really, it was just an unfortunate thing. Nothing serious happened. It's part of the sport.