

## F1 Malaysia Blog – Sunday press conference

The post-race press conference at the 2013 Malaysian Grand Prix was the most awkward F1 event since the team orders debacle at Hockenheim in 2010. Then, as now, it was team orders that were to blame – but this time, the problem was that orders were ignored, not enforced.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Mark Webber (Red Bull), and Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes).

Q: We're going to start with Sebastian. That's your 27th victory. You now match Sir Jackie Stewart with that but it looked pretty close out there on laps 43 and 44, take us through that.

Sebastian VETTEL: Obviously it was very close wheel-to-wheel racing. I think there wasn't much room for either of us so obviously it was a tight battle. I think probably I was a little bit too keen too soon because I obviously in terms of strategy was on the soft tyre towards the end, on the softer compound, felt I had a little bit more, so yeah, obviously enjoyed the fight, had the upper hand in the end. Throughout the whole race it was very close. Mark was always a little bit ahead – I was stuck in traffic. In the middle of the race I wasn't quite sure about the strategy but towards the end it seems to work very well because we were able to save that extra set and it came off with a little bit more speed.

Q: Obviously there is going to be a little bit of friction, we heard on your team radio "congratulations, but there is a some explaining to do". How do you feel about the race itself in that respect?

SV: I think obviously it's very hot today and I think if there is something to say then we need to talk internally. For sure we both enjoyed that. Of course, I'm standing in the middle now, so I probably enjoyed it a little bit more. But there is plenty of time to talk about.

Q: Probably a good time for to walk across to Mark and see how he felt about. You had a great race Mark, the tyres worked well through the early part... you had a great start, that's not always your strongest suit but you were in good shape at the beginning of the race.

Mark WEBBER: Yeah the first part of the grand prix went very well for us. I think very tricky conditions for all of us on the intermediates to start with. In the end, yeah I think we got the right strategy I think early in the race with the inters, getting the crossover quite nice. Then really it was just controlling the race and getting everything in place towards the back end of the race. Obviously I had to mark Lewis off a little bit in the middle there and then after the last stop obviously the team told me the race was over, we turned the engines down and we go to the end. I want to race as well, but in the end the team made a decision, which we always say before the race is probably how it's going to be – we look after the tyres, get the car to the end and in the end Seb made his own decisions today and will have protection and that's the way it goes.

Q: So you were surprised when he went past you?

MW: Yeah, well I turned my engine down and started cruising on the tyres and the fight was off. Anyway, we know he's a quick peddler but I was disappointed with the outcome of today's race. In the end the team did a good job, I had some good fans here from Australia, so thanks guys. I did my best.

Q: Can you take any positives away from today?

MW: Yeah I think there were a lot of things I did pretty well, from my driving, the start on the inters, there are a lot of areas where you can get that wrong, obviously like Fernando, that's unusual for him. So in the end you've got drive slow on these tyres, we're not pushing flat out as usual, all the leaders are driving very slow to save the tyres.

Q: I'll move to Lewis Hamilton, our third-place finisher. Lewis, you similarly had a very tough fight with your team-mate but it seemed to be all about saving fuel for you at the end of the race.

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, absolutely. The team did a fantastic job, it's great to be up here for them. If I'm honest I really that Nico should be standing here. Generally he had better pace than me throughout the race. He's a great team-mate and did a fantastic job today. On our side I was fuel-saving for a long, long time and unable to keep the pace of the guys in front but nonetheless we brought it home, the guys did a great job and I'm proud to be up here for them.

Q: Nico was certainly asking in very strong terms to be allowed to come past you at one point, but at that point I think Ross had called the race off hadn't he?

LH: Yeah, I can't say it's the best feeling being up here but racing is racing and I really just have to keep looking forward.

Q: We've got to ask you about that pit stop – you fancied stopping at McLaren, for old times' sake maybe?

LH: Yeah, I just did a Jenson. He did that a couple of years ago. Used to, for so many years, driving to the McLaren pit stop I don't know how I got it wrong. So big apologies to the team.

Q: I respect you're such competitive drivers, such competitive athletes. You're all kind of happy/unhappy up here today. It's been that kind of race. But at the end of the day, Sebastian, looking pretty good for the championship – not in the long-term but for your championship position obviously it's been a great day.

SV: Yeah, I think in that regard it's obviously a long race. It's good at this stage of the year to score points and we go from there but thinking about the championship right now, it's way too early. I think it was a great race for the team today. I think we did better on the tyres than we expected. Obviously it dried pretty quickly but we had a pretty clean race in terms of tyres after that.

Q: Sebastian, congratulations, your 27th career victory, equalling Sir Jackie Stewart and on a day when one of your main rivals for the championship, arguably, Fernando Alonso scored no points. You said at the midway stage in the race, something along the lines of "I'm faster than Mark, let me through." But in the end, you did it yourself. Can you tell us how your race unfolded.

SV: Obviously it was an interesting one to start with and mixed conditions. I think we weren't too bad on the crossover going to dries. Probably a little bit too soon. Some places on the track looked pretty dry but they turned out to be still quite a bit damp. I think coming out in traffic didn't help, so I lost the lead at that time, which I think put us in position two, three at that time because after that it was quite a long race, trying to look after tyres. Towards the end I feel I had quite a strong pace and obviously at the very end on a new set of medium tyres had a bit more speed and it was a close fight but I think... yeah... as you can see I'm not entirely happy. I think I did a big mistake today. I think we should have stayed in the positions that we were. I didn't ignore it on purpose but I messed up in that situation and obviously took the lead which, I can see now he's upset, but yeah, I want to be honest at least and stick to the truth and apologise. I know that it doesn't really help his feelings right now but I think other than that, obviously a very good race for the team. We handed the tyres I think pretty well today. To sum it up, apologies to Mark, obviously now the result is there but... yeah, all I can say is that I didn't do it deliberately.

Q: What exactly do you mean? Was there some understanding between you that you've broken?

SV: No. I think obviously we talk about these kind of things before we go into the race and it's not the first time we race each other. I think the difference in pace at the end probably wasn't fair because he was trying to save the car and the tyres and, as I said, I did not ignore that but I should have been aware, to be honest. Obviously then took quite a lot of risk to pass him and that was the end of the race then.

Q: Mark, obviously there have been some times in the past when you've been very close together and things have been said. Your reaction to what Sebastian has just said.

MW: Well, I was happy with how I drove today. I think it was a very good team result. We went into the race a little bit worried about how the race would unfold for us as a team in terms of performance. You still have to drive the grands prix these days at eight-tenths - it's not like the old day when grand prix drivers are driving flat out and leaning on the tyres like hell - because the tyres are wearing out. So it's not the most satisfying thing for us as grand prix drivers these days - but it's the same for everybody. And then yeah... got myself into a position where we were controlling the race. I was being told the target lap times, again in relation to how the tyres are. Obviously Seb and Lewis come back to me at one point in the race, I responded and lifted the pace up and got away around the stop. And then we had a pretty good situation tee'd up towards the end of the race. And then after the last stop I thought that it would be interesting how the team would deal with it and I was ready for a sprint to the end. And then the team obviously rang up and said "the race is... the pressure is off now. We need to look after the tyres to the end. Basically don't fight each other." I turned the engine down. We have some codes in terms of getting the cars to the end. In the end I'm happy with how I drove and... yeah it doesn't... yeah, emotions are... probably not the best time to talk at the moment.

Q: Lewis, congratulations on your first podium as a Mercedes driver. You don't look particularly happy about it. In your case you retained the position and Nico stayed behind you to the finish. Describe your race.

LH: The team did a fantastic job, so I'm very happy to be up here representing them. They've been working so hard over the winter and obviously welcomed me into the team so to be up here and to be on the second row for me and Nico is a great feeling. But of course, I don't feel spectacular sitting here. Obviously I think Nico deserved to be where I am right now but obviously the team thought that, I guess, with the position in the Championship perhaps it was logical to stay in the positions we were in. But yeah, I have to say a big congratulations to Nico because he drove a much smarter and much more controlled race than I did today.

Q: (Peter Windsor - F1 Racing) Sebastian, you said that you apologise; would you go so far as to say - without wanting to put words in your mouth - that if the situation arises, you feel that you owe Mark a win now?

SV: We just came out of the cars a couple of minutes ago but surely I want to talk with him again later on without all of you. As I said before, I didn't mean to ignore the call, it's something we talk about many times in the year and yeah, I should have behaved better today.

Q: (Livio Oricchio - O Estado de Sao Paulo) Lewis, we could hear at the end of the race while Nico was parking the car, 'remember this one,' he said to the team. Will you remember it too?

LH: Of course, of course. How can I forget?

Q: (Michael Schmidt - Auto, Motor und Sport) To all three of you, I understand the technical reasons why you have to pace yourselves at the end and why there are team orders, but let's say for the fan, is that the price we have to pay that the teams tell you in the last stint not to attack any more because everybody was excited about the fight between Mark and Seb and everybody was a bit disappointed when we heard that Rosberg was not allowed to attack you, Lewis.

MW: I'm a huge sports fan and I think we want to see people give their best to the end. It's extremely unusual to have both cars at the end of a race together and I think the team's position is... we've gone through this many times with our own team and obviously now is a different situation for the future but... yeah, it's part of Formula One. I think that when you have 500 employees and it was nip and tuck for Sebastian and I to be in the fence in turn one, Michael Schmidt's happy but is the factory happy, are we happy? So when the blood is boiling and everyone is on the edge, then yeah, we are professionals, we are world class, we did the job today but it's not an easy situation for the team. It's always spoken about, always has been, always will be. If you had one car teams, it's not a problem. In some teams to have a one car team is the ideal scenario but three cars, four cars, it's always going to be the same thing, that contact between teammates is the worst scenario for a team.

Q: Sebastian, your perspective?

SV: If I take my race, obviously, as I said, I felt a little bit more comfortable because I had new tyres at the end, a new set of tyres which I think worked a little bit better today but yeah, it's very different racing to how it used to be in the past, even to last year, it's another step, so it's a bit more extreme, just trying to look after the tyres and driving into the unknown. I think you see on TV as well how pieces of rubber are flying off and how we suffer on those tyres and obviously the last thing you want is to risk a puncture and then therefore don't finish the race so I think we would all enjoy it if we had a tyre that was stronger we could race harder on it, but equally I think situations like that come up no matter what kind of tyres you have. Obviously, as Mark said, you have a certain responsibility for the team as well and a lot of people in the factory working all year and obviously you have two cars and I think you have to take that into account as well.

Q: Lewis, your thoughts? Obviously this circuit is a fairly extreme one but do you see the picture continuing?

LH: I probably do, yeah. These tyres make it very hard, very difficult to make them last and particularly for me today, I wasn't really able to make my

tyres last as much as I wanted. I was fuel saving from an early point in the race which lost me a lot of time but generally these tyres make... it's not fun, I didn't enjoy the race. It's not the same as back in the day when you had stints where you are pushing to the maximum the whole time, you had tyres that would last. Now you're just... it's like you have a hundred dollars and you have to spend it wisely over a period of time. It makes racing a lot different. It's more strategic rather than pure speed racing.

Q: (Matt Coch - pitpass.com) Sebastian, you say you didn't ignore the instruction on purpose but I suggest that it was a deliberate move to pass Mark, so I wonder how you can say that you didn't ignore the instruction when clearly passing was a deliberate action.

SV: I think it's not an easy situation for me. Obviously I'm the black sheep right now. Obviously I put myself in that position so, as I said, all I can say is apologies to Mark. I know that right now, obviously, having just come out of the car, it's probably difficult to explain everything but the pass was deliberate, obviously I wanted to pass him, you could see that, otherwise you wouldn't even try, but I didn't mean to ignore the strategy or the call. I made a mistake, simply.

Q: (Kate Walker - Girl Racer) Lewis, you said that Nico drove a really smart race and we did hear from quite early on that you were getting a lot of fuel messages, Nico was getting a few. Were you guys fuelled just on the edge of what was acceptable, were you racing too hard? What was your problem with fuel?

LH: I think we were racing very hard to keep up with these guys because they were obviously on another level today. We were close but really on the knife edge trying to stay with them. We were trying to be as high up, as far up, as close to them as possible, but obviously I used too much fuel. I was being asked to save fuel from very early on, perhaps we were particularly aggressive on our fuel strategy which is a little bit unfortunate. I don't know what the situation was with Nico but for me, it loses quite a lot of time when you have to basically lift and coast for a hundred meters, fifty to a hundred meters before a corner. I think we can do a better job there and I think I can do a better job just looking after the tyres. I could see that Nico was not pushing too much at the start of his stints, which is where I was trying to keep up with these guys so I was perhaps pushing a little bit more, trying to really make the difference in the early stages of the tyres and took too much out of them but that's the name of the game.

Q: (Christopher Joseph - The Vancouver Sun) To both Mark and Lewis: given that F1 is a team sport and team dynamic is vital, what will you both do practically now moving forward to either repair or return to that great team dynamic you both had?

MW: I think it's very early days right now, it's very raw, obviously, and we need to work out how the team goes best forwards from here. That's obviously going to be discussed this week. I will be in Australia on my surfboard, the phone won't be engaged, see what happens.

LH: I think it's difficult to say for me what we do moving forward, but I will go and speak to the team and obviously whether or not I should apologise to Nico... I did say to him that he'd done a fantastic job. Would I let him past in the future if I was in the same position? I probably would.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Mark, as has been mentioned, emotions are clearly raw but firstly do you at least accept Seb's apology, because that's not been mentioned yet and secondly, again emotions are raw but when you have a teammate who does ignore team orders, does it make you consider your future with the team, maybe even in Formula One?

MW: My mind, in the last 15 laps was thinking that many things, yes. Many many things.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action) Again, to Vettel, do you realise in the past there have been things like this between Senna and Prost, Villeneuve and Pironi, that if you don't repair this, that the whole team gets in trouble and it all goes downhill?

SV: Well, I think there's plenty of food on the table for you guys. I think it's something between Mark and myself. I think we've had situations in the past, never like that, so obviously there has been a lot of stories in the press written about our relationship etc. I think our relationship is very professional, obviously there's no problems. We are not best friends. I think it's very difficult to be best friends with any of the drivers but I think we share respect and I respect Mark as a racing driver. I remember occasions where obviously people express their opinion about Mark and his career which I thought at some stage were very disrespectful. I obviously try to be aware of what he has achieved, where he has come from, not only in Formula One but also before that and I respect that, so I respect him as a driver. Obviously we were giving each other a very hard time, probably similar to the fight that you saw today on the track, not trying to give each other much room. It's the same at every race and obviously it's not an easy battle but in terms of team spirit etc, I think we've been working very well together in the past. Obviously I can see that for you it probably sounds a bit dull, because if you look back at the results, the last three years I've had the upper hand but I think it was always very close. At this stage, can I say much more than I made a mistake, I'm not proud that I made it. If I had the chance to do it again, I would do it differently but it doesn't count now. I can't change it now, maybe in the future there's a situation where I can but I will try to explain that again to Mark and the whole team.

Q: (Trent Price - Richland F1) Mark, obviously yesterday there were a lot of unknowns surrounding tyres going into this race but you've executed basically what was a perfect race in terms of the tyre management. That must give you some confidence for the rest of the year.

MW: Yeah, you're right, going into the event we were pretty concerned. Some of our long runs before the Grand Prix itself were pretty poor but these guys are not resting on any laurels, particularly, again, our key beacon in Adrian Newey, Adrian is working hard. The thing is I think it's quite good for the neutral, good for the fans and good for probably new people that are following Formula One, but the old - let's say people who have more of a grasp of the sport and more education of where the sport was - it's still a little bit hit and miss. With what we had, probably not much of an idea that's how the race would go for us today. I was surprised that other people were not with us, completely, people won't believe that but that's the case, and also I think, for the junior categories they need to get the tyres and things better for young drivers to learn how to push the cars to the limit and drive absolutely on the edge. You watch Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer play each other and it's playing with the lines, it's playing with precision for a five set match and we all enjoy watching that but at the moment we're driving at eight and a half tenths, eight tenths, conserving our pace and some more situations like this will probably happen in the future because there's a lot of ambiguity in who's (on the) pace and who's quick. Seb feels he's strong only in the middle of the race then I could respond. The racing is completely around nursing and trying to make the tyres survive and they're not conducive to driving a car on the limit. You don't see us really pushing on the limit. Obviously Seb and I had a push in the middle in our last stint but generally no drivers are really on the limit today. I don't know if I answered your question but anyway, that's my little rant.

Q: (Abhishek Takle - Midday) Mark, obviously emotions still very high but were the situation reversed in the future, would you stick to an agreement to turn down the engine and hold station, or would you ignore the call going by what happened today and pass Seb?

MW: I think that question is not going to be answered right now. Let's just say there were a lot of things going through my mind in the last 15 laps of the Grand Prix, lots of different reasons, not just from today but also from the past. We'll see what happens. We've got three weeks before the next race.

Q: (Ann Giuntini – L'Equipe) We know you are all tough competitors and it doesn't belong to us to judge you too severely; just a question: would you be ready, if there is the opportunity, to offer a victory to Mark, not at the end of the championship when you are already champion or when it's over, but during the season. If there is a tough fight between you, and you are ahead and he's behind.

SV: I think we had that question already. I think it was actually the first question that I got. I think it's something we need to think about, I need to think about but for sure, I can only say this, obviously, like I say, I made a mistake, I'm not proud of it. As I say, if I had the chance to do it again, I wouldn't do the same but obviously there's a lot of things that need to come together, to put ourselves in a similar position but yeah, it's definitely something that will be remembered or should be remembered.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan – The National) Seb, Mark's mentioned he thought about a lot of things for the last 15 laps, can you talk a bit about what you were thinking in those last 15 laps and when did you realise that you'd made the mistake?

SV: As I said, I didn't do it deliberately so I didn't realise I had made a mistake, only when I came back but by not everybody's but the team's reaction, I realised. I had a very short word with Mark and then it hit me quite hard and I realised that – language – I fucked up

Q: (Peter Windsor – F1 Racing) Sebastian, first lap with Fernando Alonso, did you feel anything in the impact?

SV: Yeah I was a bit surprised. Obviously I had quite a good launch and I kept the lead into Turn One. We know that Turn One is not necessarily it, there's also Turn Two and I tried to defend and because it was very slippery I had to turn in into Turn Two and got a little bit of a hit, so I'm not sure whether it was him or someone else. But when I got the hit and looked into the mirror I saw he was quite close. I don't know what happened. I'm pretty sure he carried on after that. I think Mark passed him straight away. I was only told in the end that he didn't finish the race. I don't whether that is the reason.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) A question to all drivers. What do you think the fans of Formula One will think when they hear or they read that the winner is saying "I'm sorry to win, the second should be here and the third says "I'm sorry to be here my team-mate that is fourth should be here"?

SV: I think it's great for you because you have a lot to write about. We have quite a while until the next race it's good for you, I'm sure you don't get bored. I didn't say, I think generally, you know I'm not sorry to win, I think we both of us drove a strong race today but Mark should have won. I did the mistake. I can only repeat it now. People can think in a way what they want, they will always make up their own story, but as I said I wasn't aware until we took off our helmets really, so I'm sorry for that. But surely I will try to make up, first of all explain downstairs what happened.

MW: As I say, I'm a big sports fan and the fans of any sport will want it to be a perfect world always. We want it to be pure, we want it to be as we see – football, boxing, cycling, whatever. We want it to be real. But there is an element of naivety... for me watching some sport as well and in the case of some Formula One fans watching this situation. It's impossible for everybody to understand everything and that's the same for me watching a football match or a Champions League match. Sometimes there are things you don't understand because sometimes there is naivety

LH: I don't have anything to say.

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## F1 Malaysia Blog – Race report

With a wet(ish) start, drama aplenty on track, and variable strategies affecting the outcome of the race, you'd be thinking that it was 2012 all over again on Sunday in Sepang. But the 2013 Malaysia Grand Prix will enter the history books for very different reasons. A 'multi 2l' of different reasons, if you will.

The Sepang race will be remembered for its role in reigniting the team orders debate following an afternoon in which the first four positions in the race classification were pre-determined – to an extent – by orders from the pit wall, and not by the desires or abilities of those men behind the wheel. With one very notable exception...

Sunday afternoon was dominated by the driver pairings of Red Bull and Mercedes, with Mark Webber leading his teammate at close quarters followed by Lewis Hamilton tailed by Nico Rosberg. Webber was in control of the pace for much of the afternoon, but in the middle of the race Vettel began to complain over the radio that he was faster than the Australian, who should be made to move over. At the time of the radio calls, Webber was lapping more quickly than his teammate, who was beginning to feel the pressure from Hamilton.

But the Mercedes driver had his own issues to contend with – hedging their bets on a longer race in wet conditions, the strategists had elected to fuel their drivers on a knife-edge, and Hamilton's early battles with the leading pack meant the Briton had been receiving fuel-saving messages from the pit wall for much of the grand prix. As a result, Rosberg, who was also being asked to save fuel but less frequently, was behind and gaining quickly.

Mercedes team principal Ross Brawn ordered his drivers to hold station running in third- and fourth-place, and both men (unhappily) complied. Over on the Red Bull pit wall, however, things were a little more tense.

The final round of pit stops saw a freshly-shod Vettel emerge directly behind his teammate when Webber emerged from the pit lane on new but cold rubber. Both drivers had also been instructed to hold station by Red Bull, with the pit wall giving their men the instruction to turn down their engines until the end of the race.

Webber did, Vettel didn't. The German saw his opportunity to overtake his teammate for the win and grabbed it with both hands, entering into a multi-lap wheel-to-wheel battle that provided dramatic racing which resulted in Vettel earning a clutch of 25 championship points and the admonishment from the pit wall that his behaviour had been "silly" and would be subject to discussion after the chequered flag.

The afternoon's moment of pure comedy gold came about when Hamilton was called to box. The newly-minted Mercedes driver entered the McLaren pits before being waved through by his former employers. Hamilton was lucky – the team could have elected to give their departed driver an incomplete service...

The pit lane was the scene of drama aplenty for Force India, who were eventually forced to retire both drivers thanks to a succession of wheel nut

errors that left the cars unsafe. It was a disappointing result for the team, who have developed a strong contender this season, and who have seen good performances by both Adrian Sutil and Paul di Resta hampered by forces beyond the drivers' control.

Di Resta was the worst affected of the pair – the Scottish racer first lost fifteen seconds stuck behind his teammate in the pits as the Force India crew struggled to replace Sutil's right rear wheel as both men pitted near-simultaneously for dry tyres when the track began to dry out in the opening stage of the race. The Scot then made up for the lost time on track with an inspired drive that came to nothing when he was retired as a precautionary measure following wheel nut problems during his second stop.

Title contender Fernando Alonso saw an early blow to his championship campaign when the Ferrari driver found himself beached in the run-off and out of the race following a front-wing gamble that failed to pay off. The Spanish racer damaged his front wing in a first lap incident with Vettel, and rather than pitting him for a replacement the Ferrari pit wall elected to keep their driver out on track hoping to be able to save themselves an extra stop when changing track conditions meant that Alonso would soon be coming in for dry tyres.

But on the back straight Alonso's front wing dropped off completely, and the double world champion crashed out shortly before the pit entry, his race over within minutes.

#### Malaysian Grand Prix results

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1h38m56.681s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) + 4.298s
3. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 12.181s
4. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 12.640s
5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) + 25.648s
6. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 35.564s
7. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) + 48.479s
8. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) + 53.044s
9. Sergio Perez (McLaren) + 1m12.357s
10. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 1m27.124s
11. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 1m28.610s
12. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1 lap
13. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 1 lap
14. Charles Pic (Caterham) + 1 lap
15. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) + 1 lap
16. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 2 laps
17. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 3 laps
18. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) + 5 laps

Pastor Maldonado (Williams) RET  
Adrian Sutil (Force India) RET  
Paul di Resta (Force India) RET  
Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) RET

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## F1 Malaysia Blog – Saturday press conference

After a weather-affected wet-dry qualifying session for the second grand prix in a row, we know that the Red Bull is fast, that Mercedes want to be faster, and Felipe Massa is back on good form after far too long. There were smiles aplenty in the post-qualifying press conference at the Sepang International Circuit.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Felipe Massa (Ferrari), and Fernando Alonso (Ferrari).

Q: Sebastian, a late call for a second set of intermediate tyres in Q3 and it worked out well for you.

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, I think generally an interesting qualifying session. We knew that rain was the on the way and then... to be honest we expected already some [rain] at the beginning of qualifying but it didn't come, so going out on dry [tyres]. Obviously I think we had a bit of a different approach to other people. Q2 was quite on edge I would say, so probably the rain helped us a little bit. Otherwise I think we would have had to go out again. But in that case it was just enough to go through to Q3. Then in Q3 with the circuit drying, it was clear it was better to change tyres. We confirmed that pretty early. I think we did the right thing. Very tricky because you don't know if there's more rain coming or not, but we took the decision. Bit surprised by the gap but a decent lap and I was very happy obviously. It was quite tricky because some parts of the track were still wet and others were dry but overall a very good session for us. We managed to save some tyres, which could be crucial tomorrow, so we'll see what we can do.

Q: Felipe, ahead of Fernando on the grid once again, as in Melbourne. Ferrari [look] good in the wet, did the rain help you?

Felipe MASSA: Well, I would say maybe yes. I don't know if we were able to be second and third in the dry as [there were] some other quick cars, like Webber, Kimi, maybe Mercedes as well. So I think it was a good qualifying for us. We took the right decision at the start to change tyres and managed to put a good lap together as well. I think maybe the rain helped a bit.

Q: Fernando, in third. You won here last year obviously and you're in the top three on the grid now. What's your approach to the race tomorrow?

Fernando ALONSO: Try to do a good race and try to score as many points as possible. We are not sure about the performance, the car in race pace. Obviously every long run we do is a little bit inconsistent – sometimes we are OK, sometimes not – and we need to see tomorrow how the race goes. We did not have big problems in the long runs on Friday. In Melbourne the race pace was OK, so no reason not to be optimistic for tomorrow. But

we'll see what we can do.

Q: Sebastian, back to you. You went from pole to third in Melbourne, what's the story going to be tomorrow?

SV: Well, I think if you start in the front you always want to finish there as well. Obviously as Fernando touched on, it will be a long race and difficult to know the true pace. We confirmed more or less what we saw in Melbourne. I was very happy with the balance of the car once again. I think also considering where we were last year here, a big step forward. But these days racing is a little bit different. Hopefully we'll find the right amount of percentage less than 100 per cent to start the race tomorrow. Managing the tyres will be crucial and then we go from there. We know the pace is there so hopefully we get to the chequered flag in the same position.

Q: Sebastian, in Q1 it looked like you were trying to not take too much out of that set of tyres, so that you could use them again in Q2, and you ended up 15th. So, were you living a little dangerously? Was your heart beating a little faster than normal?

SV: Yeah, obviously it's difficult to know how quick you go if you don't try to go 100 per cent – which I think it's fair to say that we tried that. Yeah, was quite tight in qualifying, I think, in dry conditions. And across the line I knew that maybe it's not quick enough but it turned out to be just OK. Obviously we were running quite late and we could see if other people... well I couldn't but the team could see if other people are going quicker. And once it was enough we obviously came in to save the tyres because we used them again in Q2 and it was just enough to get to Q3. Obviously there was a bit of rain on the way and I had a little bit of rain on the track as well. I don't think it really slowed me down, for cars that came after me I think it was a little bit more tricky up to a point where it was just too wet for dries. So once it was clear the rain got worse, it was also clear to us that our plan worked out with a little bit of help from the rain. Good to save the maximum amount of tyres possible.

Q: A number of teams had problems with weather radar during the course of the session. Can you confirm whether you at Red Bull have some extra set-up, some individuals that are placed around the circumference of the circuit that are giving information, or do you have any additional information.

SV: Well, I think we use what everyone is using, so mostly referring to the radar – which we know sometimes is very accurate and sometimes is not. To be fair, in this place, I think it's very tricky to be very precise because the weather changes so quickly. Also, considering the amount of rain that comes down and the circuit not really changing, it's quite impressive, which I think is related to just this place, high temperatures etc. We saw it yesterday during practice. The rain came down and there was steam on the track. I didn't have an effect for a long time, until it rained hard and then obviously you have to come in and change tyres. So it was similar in that regard but in terms of what we do, I think it's more or less what other people are doing as well.

Felipe, in terms of the information you were getting about the weather, can you track your thoughts through the course of that qualifying session and how you thought it was progressing for you?

FM: I think it was pretty good. Even on the... we go out, I did one timed lap and it was a pretty good lap straight away with the conditions, which was more water on the track. And then I stop, I change the tyres, looking at many people stopping as well. I go out with a new set, track was already quicker because already the dry line starts to appear. The rain was a bit less, so even in one lap you find a completely different track, so the track was much quicker. I managed to put a good lap together. Even if already I have a bit of graining in my first timed lap because the track was too dry maybe for the Inters. So, maybe I was suffering a little bit on the second and the third sector – but I mean maybe everybody was having similar problems. Anyway, the lap was good, so it was a good start for both of us. I think maybe since a long time we don't start both cars with a good pace as well in the top three. I think it's a good job for the team as well. For the team that was preparing this car in the winter as well. So, I'm really looking forward for the race tomorrow. It will be a difficult long race. Anything can happen with degradation, with strategy, with rain. But let's concentrate to do the best we can tomorrow.

Q: From what we've seen so far in the practice sessions, obviously the tyre degradation different for some teams from others, how decisive is the strategy for tomorrow and what are your thoughts on what we're likely to see?

FM: Very important. I mean, we know how these tyres behave with the high temperature. For sure you have teams which suffer a little bit more than the other teams. So, we need to concentrate on doing the right job. For sure, if I do the right job it can also be many positions at the end of the race.

Q: What about from your perspective Fernando? What have you learnt so far from the practice running that will help you in the grand prix tomorrow?

FA: Well, I think we need to use all the information we have from yesterday in the long run pace and also in this morning a little bit. Also, in qualifying, I think all the laps you do in this race track are important due to the changes that constantly you have: the temperature, the weather conditions, etcetera. So for tomorrow I think we expect some rain around – like all the afternoons here, so if it arrives before the race, at the start of the race, in the middle of the race, at the end of the race, we don't know, so we need to be ready for any change. The only good thing, the only positive thing that we have is that the car performed really well in both conditions: in rain and in dry conditions. So, we are not afraid of what is coming from the sky. Whatever arrives, we will take it and hopefully we will be competitive.

Q: Talk a little bit about the timing as well of decision-making. Obviously today it was important to get the timing right. Wet conditions like we had here last year when you won the race, it was really important – because it's a long lap here – to make the timings right. How important is that within the team to get the decisions clear?

FA: It's very important. I think here the characteristics of the circuit are quite... extreme let's say, in terms of tyre stress, so to do an extra lap with the wrong tyre can cause you a lot of time – or more than at other circuits. So we need to be spot-on the decisions tomorrow. We need to be very concentrated because there is no room for mistakes tomorrow in the race.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Fernando, you are experiencing something new at Ferrari now and maybe also in your Formula One career: your teammate is as fast as you, maybe even faster. Does it stimulate you?

FA: I think I've been racing 27 years now in motor racing – I'm getting old – so it's not the first time that we have very close competition. It was very close the last three years as well, but I know that for you it was not that close in terms of results because I think Felipe had some bad luck, some incidents sometimes, some mechanical problems other times but the last three years was much closer than I think that it looked in the points at the end. So this year it is again very close, no big difference, maybe a little bit closer and for sure the last two races we are behind on the grid but so far on Saturday there are no points so we need to keep working for Sunday. It's the best news for the team, because we need to have a competition between the two drivers in the team, we need to share information between the drivers in the team and now I think all the data that we have from free practice, from qualifying for everything is very useful to compare and to analyse to make ourselves better, so this is only good news for the team and we will push each other to our own limits and this is good news for the team.

Q: Felipe, do you want to respond to that? Do you feel completely re-energised?

FM: Yes, sure, I feel very happy, very automatically driving the car. I like the car that we have this year much more compared to the car we had last year. I think I understand a lot more the direction for the set-up and everything - we even understood that last year, from August to the end of the year. I feel really happy driving the car. When you try to do something you don't feel comfortable with you maybe cannot do the perfect lap with the car so I think that's really important for me, for the team. The best thing for the team is always to have the best drivers finishing in the best positions, so that's really a positive point for the team and for myself as well, for Fernando, so I think it's a good direction.

Q: (Abhishek Takle - Middy) Sebastian, you mentioned that the rain helped you a little bit in the end, but looking at your pace in the dry, do you think you might have been able to take pole had the rain stayed away?

SV: It's difficult to say now. What I meant obviously was that I think the timing helped in that regard, not getting to Q3 - I think we had the pace to do that on our own. It more helped in regards to saving a set of tyres for tomorrow, depending on the conditions and in general - it's difficult to say - but we were looking quite competitive all weekend. I was feeling happy in the car so there's nothing that speaks against that but would/could/should - we don't know so I think the pace set in Q2 by Nico, I think, who was fastest, was a pretty good lap. We had a strong car but whether it was enough to beat that time or not I don't know.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Felipe, you've now outqualified Fernando for the last four Grands Prix; after all you went through last season, do you feel that your performances now are a response to all those critics who wrote you off last season when your future was so up in the air?

FM: Well, I feel comfortable in the car. I think whenever you feel comfortable you can do a good lap and you can use the car to the maximum, it's possible. It was really clear that I was not comfortable last year and the year before, so many things around the car, bad luck, around myself as well, so there were so many things that were not working in the proper direction, but now they are and I know how quick I can be, I've showed that many times in the past. If everything works well, we can be competitive, it's pretty sure about that. I believe in myself and I think it can be really important for the team, for Fernando as well, for everybody. We need a stronger team, a strong position and fighting for the best position in every race so I'm happy, that's a good direction.

Q: (Carlos Miguel - La Gaceta) Fernando, are you looking to pass these guys in the first corner or are you confident of the car in race conditions and you must wait during the race?

FA: Well, I think the start will be the first opportunity. I think if everything goes normally I will have a very good start so we should be able to at least maintain the position, if not attack, so we will see how are the first meters tomorrow. I think that in this Formula One that we are experiencing today, the start is very low priority. I think that 56 laps is a very long race, a lot of strategy calls to make, a lot of tyre issues that everybody needs to get through during the race. Some people maybe look better in the first part, some people maybe look a little bit better in the second part or approaching the stints. I think the start, as I said, these days is of less importance than in the past but for sure tomorrow we will try to do a good start, similar to Melbourne - hopefully - and try to be first and second in the first part of the race.

Q: (Cristobal Rosaleny - Car and Driver) Fernando, do you think having Kimi in seventh place on the grid is good news for you, because maybe Sebastian has been struggling more with the tyres this weekend?

FA: As I said, I don't think the (grid) positions are very important these days or the first lap positions. If you have a good race pace, as I think Kimi has or Lotus has, I think they will arrive sooner or later in the race and will put some pressure on us, so I think we need to be very calm. Kimi started fantastically well in Melbourne, winning the race, he's very strong this weekend here but the race and the championships are both very long and it's not only Kimi fighting for the championship, so we will see. I think at the moment it's very close, Red Bull is strong, Mercedes very strong, again today, as Seb said now, in Q2 Nico's time was quite impressive so there are four or five teams that at the moment are on top of everybody. We also need to be competitive in the race to develop the car if we want to win the championship.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti - Corriere della Sera) Felipe, we heard Fernando's evaluation concerning the race pace. Is it the same for you or is it different?

FM: Well, yesterday we didn't have so much time to do a long run on both tyres, so we don't know. I don't know. I think it's difficult to be sure how it's going to be with the car on race pace, because yesterday I did a long run on the medium tyres but not many laps and then it started raining. So I don't know. I think maybe it can be that our car is better in the race compared to qualifying, compared to normal conditions in the dry, but we need to wait and see tomorrow.

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov - FLive) Sebastian, what is more interesting for you, rain or dry and why?

SV: Well, if it's dry we obviously saved some tyres today that could help. If it's wet, I'm not sure we have enough. It doesn't make a big difference. I think we have to go with the conditions, fortunately they're not in our hands, so obviously it's good for you but also it's very exciting for us, as Fernando touched on, finding the right lap to make the call to come in or stay out. We've seen in the past that sometimes you are just on the spot, sometimes you are not, so it can make a big difference to the race but if that happens, it's very exciting for us inside the car as well. In wet conditions generally, I think you drive the car with much more feeling. It allows you a little bit more to overcome a lack of pace or something like that during the race or overtake someone. Nevertheless, I think we need to be focused every single lap and go from there.

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## F1 Malaysia Blog - Saturday report

The final practice session of the Malaysian Grand Prix weekend was a close-fought session, with more than half the grid covered by a single second. In the early stages it looked as though Red Bull were struggling, with both drivers scrabbling for grip, but by the close of play Sebastian Vettel was back on timesheet-topping form.

Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg had set the pace for much of FP3, but the Mercedes pair were no match for Vettel once the Red Bull driver had his tyres in their optimal operating window. Rosberg found himself knocked down the standings as drivers swapped on to the softer medium compound, eventually finishing the session behind Mercedes engine customers Jenson Button, Paul di Resta, and Adrian Sutil, with latter P3 on the timesheets when the chequered flag fell.

Having taken a number of knocks in the press for their poor showing so far this year, McLaren appear to have found some pace over the past few days, but the MP4-28 is far from being the front-runner the team had hoped it would be.

With strong performances from Mark Webber, Kimi Raikkonen, Felipe Massa, and Fernando Alonso rounding out the top ten, the stage was set for an exciting qualifying session in the muted light – and expected rain – that characterise late afternoon in Malaysia's Klang Valley.

When qualifying got underway on Saturday afternoon the temperatures were high and climate dry, the skies bright and dotted with a few clouds. There was a short delay at the start of the session before cars left the pits, and both drivers from Red Bull, Force India, and Lotus – three teams that have looked strong all weekend – waited until the first session was half finished before leaving the pits.

Adrian Sutil went straight to the top of the timesheets with his first timed lap: the German driver has been impressing on his F1 return, and has made short work of putting teammate Paul di Resta in the shade. Kimi Raikkonen was also straight out of the pits and on the pace, while Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber were playing tyre preservation games, setting their first timed laps with less than five minutes to go.

There was little sense for the front runners in wasting rubber once they were in a secure position for promotion to Q2: it was the Williams, the Saubers, and the Toro Rossos that were left fighting with the backmarkers for a guaranteed slot in the next session. But even Red Bull wasn't safe in a close-fought session – despite their best-laid plans, both Vettel and Webber were sent out for second runs to ensure safe passage through qualifying.

With Jean-Eric Vergne and Valtteri Bottas joining the Caterham and Marussia drivers at the back of the grid, Q2 was destined to be an all-out fight between sixteen closely-matched drivers. Less closely matched were the Marussia pairing, with Jules Bianchi finishing Q1.1.2s ahead of his teammate.

When the pitlane opened for the start of Q2, the skies over Sepang remained dry but humid – but it was not to last.

Esteban Gutierrez had the honour of putting the first time on the board, but the Sauber driver was quickly bested – by a three-second margin – by Sutil before the Force India driver was dethroned by the Mercedes pairing of Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton, both of whom gave the impression of setting fast but easy laps that should see them through to Q3 without wasting excessive rubber.

Last to set times were Massa, Alonso, di Resta, and Pastor Maldonado, although the Force India driver was one of the first men out of the pits. While the Scottish driver flat-spotted his tyres with a lock-up on that early run, he made the odd decision to return to the pits after setting purple times in two of the track's three sectors.

When he was on a flying lap, di Resta was caught out by rain at the back side of the circuit, where the slippery track conditions saw the Force India running wide and into the grass, another set of tyres damaged in the process. The team would live to regret that early lost banker lap, as di Resta's second timed effort was even worse, resulting in a full 360-degree spin.

With just under five minutes remaining, Q2 was all but over as the cars out on track returned to the pits in readiness for what would become a wet weather top-ten shoot-out.

As the cars lined up at the pitlane exit for the start of Q3 it was a case of inters all the way. The rain fell, the sun shone, and the skies above the Sepang International Circuit boasted a rather spectacular rainbow. Race control disabled DRS for reasons of wet-weather safety, and all ten drivers were out of the pits before the first minute of the ten-minute session had drawn to a close.

Hamilton ran wide on his out lap in the slippery conditions, but kept it between the white lines on his first timed lap. But the Briton was bested by Mercedes teammate Rosberg, who went purple in the two final sectors before Vettel crossed the line in his typical pole-snatching fashion, besting the Mercedes by nearly 1.5s over the course of a single lap.

The Ferrari pairing showed solid pace in the rain, although nothing compared to what Vettel was able to achieve in the RB9; for the second time in two races Massa's Q3 time was faster than that of teammate and erstwhile Ferrari number one Alonso.

With around three minutes remaining the track conditions had dried out once again, with no more rain falling over the main straight. Three of the ten drivers elected to pit for fresh inters before making a final run at pole, but it was clear to all and sundry that the Red Bulls would be tough to beat. Clear to all but Hamilton, who grabbed provisional pole while his teammate slowed.

The final minutes were an all-out shoot-out, the drying track meaning that times fell with every driver who crossed the line. Raikkonen had it, then lost it to Alonso, who was himself bested by teammate Massa. But when all was said and done, it was an impressive final lap from Vettel that did the trick, nearly one second ahead of anything the competition could muster.

#### Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m49.674s
2. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m50.587s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m50.727s
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m51.699s
5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m52.244s
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m52.519s
7. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m52.970s
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m53.175s
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m53.439s
10. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m54.136s

11. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m37.636s
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m38.125s



13. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m38.882s
  14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m39.221s
  15. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m44.509s
  16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) NO TIME SET
  
  17. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m38.157s
  18. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m38.207s
  19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m38.434s
  20. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m39.314s
  21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m39.672s
  22. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m39.932s
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## F1 Malaysia Blog – Friday press conference

It was an atypically quite senior team personnel press conference that took place in the Sepang paddock on Friday afternoon, with the focus more on the past than on the present or the future.

Present were Cyril Abiteboul (Caterham), James Allison (Lotus), Bob Bell (Mercedes), Robert Fernley (Force India), Pat Fry (Ferrari), and Sam Michael (McLaren).

Q: James, can we start with you? A great win for you and the team to start the year off in cold conditions in Melbourne and from what we saw this afternoon can we conclude that you're pretty quick in the heat as well?

James ALLISON: The weekend will tell but it's been a good day so far and the car seems quite happy here.

Q: Is there any circuit that you fear from here?

JA: All of them! You just take them one at a time. It would be good to come away from here, if we can, competitive. So I think doing well in cold and doing well in hot would be good.

Q: Will you be able to maintain that development throughout the 2013 season against your main rivals?

JA: I think our team has got a reasonable history of keeping up with, and sometimes exceeding the general development race that happens during the season.

Q: Can you say anything about the way Kimi Raikkonen drove in Melbourne. There seems to be a surge of confidence really. He's gone up a level has he, since last year?

JA: He's certainly very, very relaxed and confident this year. He drove the race incredibly patiently. I think he knew he had a good car under him. He knew he didn't have to scamper up behind the group in front and he looked after the tyres, only going quickly when he needed to. It was just a very mature and smooth, fast race.

Q: Bob Bell, last year the Mercedes was very good in cold conditions, perhaps less good at places like this. Have you addressed that with this car?

Bob BELL: Yes, I think we very much hope we have. We put a lot of effort in over the winter to really understand what the issues with last year's car were. We had a pretty reasonable winter test in cold conditions. Of course Melbourne, as you said, was cold as well. We'll see when we come away from here whether we've actually got on top of those issues. I think we're pretty upbeat, pretty confident we've achieved that.

Q: What differences have you noticed in the way you're operating as a team with the arrival of Lewis Hamilton?

BB: Lewis, no question, is a new dynamic for us and that always happens with the introduction of a new driver, particularly one as competitive as Lewis is, so he's a real motivational force in the team and indeed for his own team-mate. I think he's lifted all of our game. He's driving us; he's clear about what he wants, what direction he wants to go in, and that is sympathetic to where we were going anyway, so I think it's going very well.

Q: What effect do you see he's had on his team-mate Nico Rosberg?

BB: Team-mates naturally always want to outdo each other, so if you bring a new one in, if that raises his game then I think his team-mate will try and follow suit. It's perfectly natural healthy competition.

Q: Pat Fry from Ferrari – second place finish in Australia, ahead of Red Bull. You're leading the Constructors' Championship going into this race. What was the feeling, the mood like in the post-race debrief?

Pat FRY: I think people were pleased with the race pace of the car. It was quite obvious that Kimi was going to be two-stopping. I think you could see him two seconds back from the group, as James mentioned. I don't think we could have followed suit and competed on a two-stop which is why we went for the aggressive three-stop, which got us through the traffic. All in all, it's one those... with that and the 60km/h pit lane limit, it's always that balance between two-stop and three-stop. We weren't brave enough to make the two-stop work. Kimi was, so good luck to them, or well done to them. We just need to keep on working on the pace of it. It's nice being second but you always want to win don't you.

Q: What are your thoughts about the pace of Lotus, the way they've started the season?

PF: It is very good. I don't think we would have been brave enough to have attempted a two-stop there, so yeah, I think they've done well.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about the renaissance of Felipe Massa? Obviously he was strong in the second half of last year, he out-qualified Alonso in Melbourne and raced ahead of him for two stints. What is it that's changed in him do you think?

PF: It's hard to say really. He's got a good attitude. He's driving very well. Very sensible not overdriving the car. If you look at last year the first half was a bit of a struggle, the second half was a lot better and he's continued that form into this year, which is obviously good for us as a team in the Constructors' Championship.

Q: We'll come to Bob Fernley from Force India. Force India obviously led the last race of 2012 in Brazil and you led twice in Melbourne last weekend en route to seventh with Adrian. What's the outlook, do you think, for the year ahead?

Bob FERNLEY: I think the Brazil race was on merit to a degree what we did in Melbourne obviously was tyre choice. It was very nice to be there but it was the result of strategy more than anything else. Overall, I think the performance of the car and team is quite good at the start of the season.

Q: And what was the problem for Adrian Sutil? We saw him in his shorts with half an hour to go.

BF: We had an oil seal problem. We just needed to stop it to make sure there was no damage to the engines.

Q: Can you talk a little about Sutil, his return from over a year out of a Formula One cockpit, very little testing. Were you surprised by his performance?

BF: I wasn't surprised after his test in Barcelona. I think in Barcelona, when Adrian came in, if anybody could have put together a perfect assessment of a driver coming in for a test it was that occasion. I think Adrian did a great job and didn't surprise me at all in Melbourne.

Q: Cyril, Caterham one of I guess three teams that were perhaps a little disappointed with performance in Melbourne - perhaps along with Williams and McLaren - what's going on behind the scenes at Leafield that gives you confidence going forward?

Cyril ABITEBOUL: Clearly, I think that we have chosen to go for a strategy that is a little bit different from other teams, in the sense that we do not operate our new car for now. We have strategies that will make the car evolve according to different packages, the first of which will come in Bahrain. So we are running right now on hybrid car, so we are pretty much where we expected it to be. It doesn't mean it is where we wanted it to be. Having said that, we have been analysing clearly the difference, the gap between Marussia and our car. First we want to diminish a little bit the fight between Marussia and ourselves. We are just competitors and we would like to make our way up through the grid, not backwards but up towards the front. Clearly we see most of the developments that we did over the last year, the last 12 months, we think they made two-thirds of the difference over the last 12 months and only one-third over the winter. And of that one-third only half is coming from KERS. So I think that we have a real chance to be optimistic. Some good stuff is happening in the wind tunnel. Obviously we want to make sure this is translating into reality in Bahrain.

Q: Obviously it's a home race for your Malaysian shareholders. How's it looking for this weekend?

CA: It's looking pretty much similar to the last weekend in the sense that it's going to be on the edge with Marussia. I think the utilisation of tyres and driver familiarisation, driver mistakes also can make a difference so this is what we are getting ready for. We are going to have our shareholders present, so we want to make sure we have a good show at that moment.

Q: Sam, the team and drivers were very open in Melbourne about the problems that you were suffering with the car. Can I ask you what went well that weekend?

Sam MICHAEL: I think we got close to extracting most out of the car. First of all it goes without saying that we're not... there's no-one in McLaren who's satisfied with where our performance is. So we've spent a lot of time in the last few weeks - before Melbourne as well because we had all the signs there from winter testing - going through data and analysing exactly what we need to do to improve the car. We're about winning races, as we proved at the end of last year. We made some quite substantial changes to the car with a view that over the course of the season they would pay us back in terms of wins. I'd say that we... all of the people inside the group at the moment are focussed on understanding the 28 and turning it into a winner as soon as possible.

Q: Presumably you've considered - you won the last two races of last year - you've considered bringing last year's car? Have you now ruled that out as a plan?

SM: All of our focus is on the current car. That involves understanding it, doing tests, we've done a lot of testing today actually on the circuit, we've done a lot of work in the factory in the last four or five days since Melbourne, making some encouraging progress in those areas, so right now all of our efforts are concentrated on the current car.

Q: What does your experience tell you about how long it will be before you're challenging the two gentlemen [Fry, Allison] to the right?

SM: As soon as possible - but it's very hard to make predictions because when you're trying to unlock two or three different areas on the car, my experience tells me it's very unpredictable to know when that's going to happen. What I will say is the past history of McLaren as a group to recover from situations like this is extremely strong and consistent. They've done it before and I don't see any reason why the engineers won't do it again this time - especially based on the activity that I've seen and we've all been involved in over the last couple of weeks. I think it won't take long for us to be back up there - that's the target.

Q: It looked like Jenson Button in particular was a bit closer to the pace when the conditions got more changeable after the rain. Are you hoping for more of those conditions over the weekend?

SM: Hopefully. That was a trend that we saw in Melbourne as well - that we were extremely competitive on intermediate conditions. Not so much on full wets, and the slicks... we know where we are. We'll see what happens. Normally here it's full wet or nothing. It's one of those one zone-type tracks.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - The Citizen) To the two engineers plus anyone else if you'd like to contribute: last week we had qualifying delayed and then run on Sunday. We've had races red-flagged here and postponed - it's been happening more and more recently. Is there any way the sport can put together regulations where we can minimise the number of either red flags or postponements to give the fans what they really come here to see and pay for?

PF: I think that with the conditions you sometimes get here, there's so much rain, it would just be impossible to run so I think we can try and make the cars safer to run and I think we have but purely down to the... is there a tyre good enough for the conditions... there was a downpour in 2009, wasn't it... you're never going to make something that can survive that kind of situation.

Q: (Dieter Rencken - The Citizen) Sorry, I'm talking generally, not just about here, because we've had it in Canada and all over the place. So I'm saying should we not be looking at a committee to investigate some way of overcoming this, not necessarily just here in Malaysia?

PF: I just think that for me, personally, I just think it's a very difficult thing to overcome. With that much water, it's not safe to run. Whether the FIA want to get a committee together to try and understand and see if it is possible to run in that, that's entirely up to them.

JA: I haven't got a lot to add. You know, you've seen it. The spray becomes impenetrable very quickly and the cars start to aquaplane. You could do

something about the aquaplaning to an extent, with a different set of tyres, but the spray would still be an issue and there would still come a point where the aquaplaning would dominate, especially at places like this so I don't think technically there is much of a solution. We just have to wait for when there are conditions that a car can run.

BF: Not unless anybody's got a quick connection to the man upstairs, no.

BB: No, I don't think I can add anything to that. I think the teams are genuinely busy enough trying to design the car to meet the existing regulations. I'm sure the FIA have it within their power to investigate these things and see whether something could be done but as far as the teams are concerned, we've just got to get on and do the best job we can within the regulations as they currently stand.

Q: (Kate Walker – Girl Racer) Mr Fernley, over the last few races – last season, we saw it last week as well – you guys seem to have made a deliberate decision on the pit wall to split your strategies and do almost opposite things with your two drivers. Is this a lack of confidence in your strategic decisions, or is it something more deliberate?

BF: I don't think it's a lack of confidence. I think I would have thought that Melbourne was obvious, that you've got one driver that's qualified on a supersoft and then you'd be the first of the contenders running on the medium. I didn't think there was anything risky in that at all.

Q: (Kate Walker – Girl Racer) It just seems that with that kind of approach, it's not just in Melbourne, we did see it in 2012 as well, that it will give one driver the opportunity to finish really well and the other less so. Not that you're favouring one over the other, it was an even split. I was just wondering what the thinking behind that approach was?

BF: Well, I think in 2012 you've got a slightly different process there because obviously we were defending – not defending, actually we were attacking and trying to get our position back from Sauber, so what you're trying to do is maximising the opportunities for optimum points and that would be the reason for the main split of the strategies. But where possible, you're always going to go for an optimum strategy for both drivers and we would do that. I think in Melbourne that was an optimum strategy for both drivers.

Q: Speaking of two different drivers, James, what's the situation with Romain Grosjean? He's not been quite on Kimi's pace in the first Grand Prix and obviously again today he seems to be a bit behind; what's your analysis?

JA: Romain showed us over and over again last year that he is a driver with a lot of pace. That's the one really valuable commodity that a race driver has and he's got that. He's not had an easy weekend either here or there, because we haven't been able to provide two cars in exactly the same configuration on either occasions so in Melbourne on Friday he was running a step behind Kimi in terms of his aero package, and then he had the upgrade for Saturday morning but then Saturday was disturbed by the weather as we all know. Here, once again, we only have one set of kit and we've chosen to run that with Kimi and Romain is disadvantaged for that. It's a feature of not having in-season testing that you try to upgrade the cars as fast as you can and generally speaking, that means that you're always going to have one set of kit ahead of the second set and that almost inevitably means that one driver gets to try it before there is a second one available. We will always try to get two sets available but not always possible. So he's had a difficult set of circumstances and he's also up against a teammate who is really firing on all cylinders so those are the two things.

Q: (Alex Popov – RTR) Cyril, can you clarify the story of a possible merger with Marussia?

CA: Yeah, I think we provided a comment – both Marussia and ourselves – regarding the fact that there have been some discussions over the Christmas period but clearly I think we all know that business, we all know Formula One, we know that it's quite a fluid and versatile environment. To be honest, I'm not that old and since I've been in F1 I think I've maybe heard ten times about mergers, including four big names, so there is nothing very big in that. We looked at that, we looked at whether it was making any sense, it didn't make any sense, it didn't happen. End of story.

Q: (Luigi Perna - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Pat, are you confident you can have the same pace as Lotus or even better in this race compared to Melbourne?

PF: I think our race pace should be OK here, similar to Melbourne. In terms of tyre degradation I'm not sure yet. We need to go and look at the numbers. Obviously today's running was a little bit mixed up. When everyone was doing their long runs this afternoon, there was rain in turns six and seven, so we need to see. Hopefully we will be able to get the degradation under control as well.

Q: Is it likely to be another race where doing one less stop than your rivals is one of the keys to success, do you think?

PF: I'm not sure how close we are to a three to four changeover or a two to three changeover. We need to have a look through the data and see really. I'd like to see James try and two stop here on Sunday.

Q: James, do you fancy it?

JA: Generally speaking this track is one stop more than Melbourne, so I think that might be a bit brave.

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## F1 Malaysia Blog – Friday practice report

After winning the season-opening Australian Grand Prix, Kimi Raikkonen put in another strong showing during Friday practice at Malaysia's Sepang International Circuit.

On Friday morning it was Mark Webber who topped the timesheets, with the Finnish driver giving the Red Bull racer chase, but over the course of the rain-hit afternoon session it was Raikkonen who had the pace over Sebastian Vettel and Ferrari drivers Felipe Massa and Fernando Alonso.

As tends to be the case during F1, the track was largely quiet for the first half hour of the session once the traditional installation laps had been and gone.

One driver who was quiet for good reason was Raikkonen, who spent much of the morning confined to the garage when the team discovered a sensor issue on the E21's KERS battery. A refit was needed, and the lost track time only served to make the Finnish driver's P2-worthy lap all the more impressive when the chequered flag fell to mark the end of the morning's running.

Mercedes spent the early part of the afternoon session working on their longer runs, and when the time came for Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg to lay down some qualifying simulations the heavens broke, an hour earlier than the much joked about monsoon o'clock that strikes around 4pm.

Raikkonen's pace-setting lap was set shortly before the rain began to fall.

It was a brief but heavy burst of rain, and after a period of watching an empty racetrack the sparse crowd of attending fans were treated to twenty minutes or so of intensive running as the teams did their best to complete their planned programmes.

Tyres continued to be a talking point throughout the day's running, with Red Bull in particular complaining of unmanageable graining that both drivers felt was affecting their ability to show off the RB9's pure pace.

When all was said and done, it was a typical Friday's running. With not much in terms of new components for drivers to test out, the main focus of the day was learning as much as possible about Pirelli's 2013 tyre compounds. To that end, it was actually quite useful for the teams to have FP2 disrupted by rain – both qualifying and the race are expected to see similar weather conditions, and teams the length of the pitlane were able to get the measure of their cars on intermediate tyres on one of the hottest tracks on the calendar.

The exception to the components rule was Lotus, who had Romain Grosjean running a slightly different – and older – specification car to Raikkonen. According to technical director James Allison, the team have been unable to provide two sets of new developments to their drivers, and Grosjean drew the short straw in both Melbourne and Sepang. This put the French driver on the back foot, and explains his relative lack of pace when compared with his teammate.

While practice is hardly the be all and end all of a race weekend, it is worth noting that Massa was faster than Alonso in FP2, having been somewhat slower over the course of the morning. Given that the Brazilian also outqualified his teammate last week, and led him in the early stages of the Australian Grand Prix, it looks as though Massa has finally reclaimed his mojo, and should help Ferrari score valuable constructors' points over the course of the season.

#### FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m36.395s [15 laps]
2. Kimi Räikkönen (Lotus) 1m37.003s [15 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m37.104s [21 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m37.319s [13 laps]
5. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m37.588s [19 laps]
6. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m37.769s [17 laps]
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m37.771s [15 laps]
8. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m37.773s [15 laps]
9. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m37.840s [18 laps]
10. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m37.915s [17 laps]
11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m38.173s [16 laps]
12. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m38.673s [16 laps]
13. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m38.830s [17 laps]
14. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m39.054s [17 laps]
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m39.204s [16 laps]
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m39.208s [19 laps]
17. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m39.284s [17 laps]
18. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m39.567s [16 laps]
19. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m40.728s [17 laps]
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m40.996s [14 laps]
21. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m41.163s [18 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m41.513s [14 laps]

#### FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m36.569 [28 laps]
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m36.588s [27 laps]
3. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m36.661s [33 laps]
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m36.985s [23 laps]
5. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m37.026s [29 laps]
6. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m37.206s [26 laps]
7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m37.448s [32 laps]
8. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m37.571s [30 laps]
9. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m37.574s [32 laps]
10. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m37.788s [10 laps]
11. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m37.838s [21 laps]
12. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m37.865s [29 laps]
13. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m38.068s [31 laps]
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m38.645s [23 laps]
15. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m38.738s [31 laps]
16. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m38.801s [27 laps]
17. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m38.904s [31 laps]
18. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m39.508s [30 laps]
19. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m39.660s [28 laps]
20. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m40.757s [29 laps]
21. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m40.768s [32 laps]
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m41.438s [23 laps]

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## F1 Malaysia Blog – Thursday press conference

Rookies and race winners were the name of the game at the Sepang International Circuit on Thursday afternoon, when the FIA called Formula One's newbies and Australia Grand Prix winner Kimi Raikkonen to face a grilling by the world's media.

Present were Jules Bianchi (Marussia), Valtteri Bottas (Williams), Max Chilton (Marussia), Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber), Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus), and Giedo van der Garde (Caterham).

Q: Kimi, great win for you and the team to start of with, in cold conditions. How do you and the team feel about being able to repeat that performance level in the heat of Malaysia?

Kimi RAIKKONEN: We don't know yet. Last year we were pretty good when it was hot and actually it was better for us, but obviously we haven't run in this kind of conditions and the winter has been very cold, so I have no idea. But if it's anything like it was last year we should be pretty OK, but we have to wait and see how it goes.

Q: One notable detail from the Melbourne weekend is that you were over a second slower than the Red Bull in qualifying, but you turned it round to be over a second faster than them on your fastest race lap. What do you put that down to?

KR: I wouldn't say that the qualifying was a very normal situation with all the weather – it got delayed and all that stuff. But if it was normal dry conditions I'm pretty sure we are more close. We will wait and see when we get a normal qualifying. Then, I'm sure we are not a second behind, or 1.4 seconds or whatever it was.

Q: Esteban, coming to you. Youngest driver in Formula One and the best-placed rookie in Australia in 13th. A tricky Sunday for the Sauber team with your team-mate not starting the race, but what did you take from the weekend?

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Well, for me the experience was very important. Being able to say that I finished my first Formula One race is already quite a good step. And from then on, taking the experience into account, I will try to improve on the points where I can improve following this second challenge here in Malaysia. It will be very different circumstances but I think it's going to be a very exciting one.

Q: Can you talk about the pressure of expectation, given what Sergio Perez did here last year in a Sauber and what he went on to do in the rest of the year?

EG: It is obviously something that is there but I'm not going to think about it because it's different circumstances. I think the weather is varying a lot here and it's playing a big role in how the race is going. I'm going to try to do my best, going at my own pace and improve where I can improve, step by step.

Q: Valtteri, you finished 14th in Melbourne, outqualified your team-mate [Pastor] Maldonado and finished the race. What did you take away from your debut?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Of course I learned a lot in my first grand prix. It was tough but it was nice to see that everything went without any bigger problems. Of course we would have liked to finish the race in a much higher position and everyone was expecting much more from us, including us. From my side I think it was not a bad first race but definitely we didn't finish where we wanted to.

Q: As you say, the team is not where it wants to be. Why do you think the car is struggling?

VB: Well I'm not going to go into the details now but we understand now better what went wrong, because the car has potential. The performance is there and we just need to get it out really. And for this grand prix already we think we can fix some things. We will see tomorrow a little bit more where we are.

Q: Jules, 11th-fastest race lap en route to a 15th-placed finish on your debut. It's a performance that's got you on a number of people's radars already. What did you think of it?

Jules BIANCHI: Well, honestly it has been a really nice weekend for me in Australia even if it was quite a late call for me because I didn't do all the pre-season testing. Anyway, I was really happy. I just tried to enjoy and see what we were able to do in the race. Obviously the race went pretty well. We had a good start, everything was good, and we did a good result. We know what we have to improve and we will try to do that for the next few races.

Q: You were with Force India of course in February in testing and you only had on test with Marussia before Australia. What do you think is possible with this car this season?

JB: I think I was really surprised when I drove it for the first time. My expectation was a lot lower than that. I was really happy when I drove it. I think we can do good results. We know what we have to improve again, so we're just trying to do that, trying to improve the car and trying to improve myself as well, because I'm new in the team, new in Formula One. I want to show people what I am able to do, so I will try to do my best for all the other races.

Q: Max Chilton, coming to you. Seventeenth in Melbourne for Marussia on your debut. Things have obviously happened pretty quickly for you, getting into Formula One at 21. How are you settling in?

Max CHILTON: I feel comfortable. I felt ready when the decision was made that I got the race seat. I believe in myself, that I've got a good chance. I think this year the Marussia car has got a good chance of moving its way up the field. I feel at home, the team are fantastic and I've now got a really good team-mate to work with and I can maybe learn from, and maybe he can learn from me, so it's a winning formula.

Q: You obviously know this track; you raced here in GP2 and finished on the podium. What do you think of it?

MC: Yeah, it's a very challenging circuit, it's got some long, high-speed flowing corners but then you've got some technical stuff to get out of the corner onto a long straight, which is very important. The main thing with this circuit is the heat. It was a tough race last year, but I can tell that it doesn't feel as hot as last year, so I don't need to worry about that. We just need to focus on getting the most out of the car and beating our rivals.

Q: Giedo, you out-qualified your team-mate and got an 18th-place finish in Melbourne. What did you take from your first experience of Formula One?

Giedo VAN DER GARDE: It was a tough race. Max hit me in the first stint, so the floor got damaged quite badly. Anyway, we managed to finish the race and it was a good experience for me. I learned a lot with the tyres. Now this is the next step and we'll see what we can do here.

Q: Looks like you're starting out the year chasing Marussia. Do you see reasons in the pipeline to be positive?

VdG: I think with here you never know what the weather is going to be. I think we looked quite strong, I have to say, so I hope for a bit of rain here. And then the next two [races] we know we still have the same car and in Barcelona we'll get a big upgrade, so let's see where we are then.

Q: (Trent Price - Richland F1) Question for Esteban: very impressive 30-lap stint on the mediums in the race, obviously you weren't able to compare data with Nico but did that come quite naturally because the Sauber's renowned for being quite easy on its tyres. Was that something you put down to the car or something that came naturally for you?

EG: Are you referring to the long stint?

Q: Yes.

EG: Yes, I think from that point of view, I think the tyres are playing a big role in the race and it's something that I really focussed a lot to try to find the best compromise into the speed and the long stint I could do. It was a very long stint, at the same time we found out we had a slight flat tyre through that stint, so it also was the balance was switching a little bit, especially at the last of the stint. So, I think it's just a matter of finding the right compromise of how quick we can be and also how long we want to keep the tyres. As we can see, Kimi did a very similar strategy and he was able to be a lot quicker, so there's something that definitely we can find and we will be looking into that.

Q: (Alex Popov - RTR) Question especially for Valtteri and Esteban. You have a very tough challenge inside your team because Pastor already won the race and Nico nearly won the race in Brazil. You prefer this situation or you prefer the situation with a little bit less level for your team-mate for the first year?

VB: I prefer it. Pastor is a very good reference. He is a quick driver, it's his third year at Williams now and definitely for me it's good to compare to him and good to see from him if I have some things to improve. Hopefully we will be close and hopefully I can keep up in the beginning of the season and I try to improve and then get better. Definitely a good reference and I prefer that.

EG: I think a little bit the same as Valtteri. I think it's good to have a good reference, especially knowing that Nico is a very quick and consistent driver and yes, it was not the ideal situation for him not to do the race in Melbourne but it would be nice to have that reference up until this race but now in this race let's hope for a good reference to get that reference and try to move on.

Q: (Ben Edwards - BBC) A two-part question for Max and for Kimi. Max, first of all, can you talk to us about the difficulties when you're being lapped by the leaders? What you've got to learn, what gets more difficult from that point of view? And Kimi, with five rookies out there, did you find any problems yourself when lapping the guys coming into Formula One? If you could just talk about that.

MC: Well, the team over the winter testing did give me some guidance of the best way to do it, and they did say it is an art and it will take you a few races. I definitely felt, at the start of the race in Melbourne, when obviously the blues started to come earlier because we had to do a nose-change, I was getting the blue flags earlier than expected. Our races are planned to be as fast as you can to the blue flags and then your race slows down - and that came sooner than we thought. But, I could definitely tell after 20 laps, the blue flags, where to do it. And the time you can save - and it is a huge time-saver. Obviously you don't want to disrupt the leaders because their race is more important than ours but our race is still important, so you need to do the best for the team by not losing too much time. I think after the next few races I'll be fully comfortable and you just naturally know where to do it and lose the least amount of time possible.

KR: Last year for sure there was some cars and teams that were not very easy to get past when you were lapping them but at least in the first race it seems to be a bit better. So, I have no complaints on that. Of course it's some days difficult to let people past, to move off the way quick enough but for sure everybody's trying to do their best and if something goes wrong obviously they get penalised - so it was OK in the first race at least.

Q: (Ben Waterworth - Richard's F1) For Kimi, been ten years since your first victory here in Sepang ten years ago. Special place for you here in Sepang? And win be a perfect anniversary present for it?

KR: It's not really any special place. I mean, of course it was nice to win the first race but we really should have won the year before, so it's nice to come back here - I don't enjoy the heat and the humidity of the place but the circuit is nice so, we know how it's going to be more or less here. It usually gives a good race and that's the main thing. Hopefully we can have another good weekend and score good points.

Q: (Heikki Kulta - Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, do you expect the hot weather helping you and the team to find more speed from the car?

VB: I hope so, because I think one of the problems was - a little bit - the tyre warm up. Getting the tyres to work properly but, y'know, it's quite unknown, and it's the same for everyone. No-one has run these tyres in these conditions. We will see tomorrow; we will experience the tyres - but I do really hope so.

Q: (David Croft - Sky Sports) We often get views from some of our viewers that there shouldn't be blue flags in Formula One and that everyone has a right to be racing out on the circuit and shouldn't have to move over and it's an art to overtake a back-marker or a front runner. I just want to know from a few of you, do you think there should be blue flags in Formula One? Kimi and the rest of the rookies...

JB: Well, obviously I think it's normal that we have to move the way out because they are fighting for the victory and we are lapped, so when we are lapped I think it's right to give the place to the leader. So, yeah, I think it's normal rules to have blue flags.

VdG: I agree. I think you should let the leaders past, they're fighting for the win.

Q: Esteban, it must be strange going when you're going at the front. Obviously your car's a little faster than some of these other ones but when you get used to racing at the front, then you have to let cars through, that mental adjustment - I guess you hope it doesn't last too long in Formula One.

EG: Yeah, that's true! I hope I don't see much blue flags this season but I agree with Jules' and Giedo's comment. Really, I don't have much comment about it.

Q: How much do the older drivers and experienced front runners take a lead on this in drivers' briefings?

KR: There's not much talked about. Everybody knows what they have to do. They're not racing for the first time, they've been racing for a long time.

Like I said, it's sometimes easier to let people past than other times. Of course, you understand that they don't want to lose too much time but it's more important for them to move over because some days they can really make a difference as to who wins or who not. In the end, if you don't want to get blue flags you should be in the front, simple as that.

Q: (Michael Casey - Associated Press) Kimi, how does it feel to have a target on your back coming into the weekend?

KR: There's no target. We don't do anything different this weekend than we did in the previous race or last year. If people think that we are leaders, it makes no difference to our work, what we did or what we're going to do this weekend or any other weekend. Like I said, we try to do best and hopefully we can score some good points.

Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action) Jules, you had a very good race (in Australia) but you had so little testing; do you see yourself making some really big steps when you get some more track time?

JB: Obviously it would have been better for me to have more testing but my race was good and there's much more to come from my side, specially to set the car up well, because I don't know the car. I only did one and a half days before the race, so I think it's something I need to get used to and for sure I will have more performance after that. But I think I'm already at a good level, for sure. I trained a lot last year with Force India and the year before with Ferrari, so now I feel ready to race in Formula One, that's why I am here. I still need to improve but I'm already happy with that.

Q: And how much is the simulator helping you in this situation?

JB: Well, obviously I did a lot of simulator preparation before the race in Australia and it was really helpful, especially because I didn't know the track and the same for this track, so it's something really useful.

Q: (Abhishek Takle - Midday) Question for the rookies: when you step up to Formula One obviously the physical challenge is a lot tougher but specially for a race like Malaysia which is known to be hot. Is there any sort of special physical preparation that you will do in the run-up to such a race?

MC: Obviously the step up from the junior categories is mainly that the race lengths are... we're used to probably a race of an hour maximum. These can go on for a limit of two hours but usually around 40 minutes(longer) so that 40 minutes does make a difference and also the G-forces, but the powered steering makes it a lot easier. Physically, you just need to be more specific on what you're working for, it's not a big leap up, you just have to make it a lot more specific and focus on the areas where you need it. But for races like this, with the heat, there's not really certain training you can do... you can do heat chamber work, you can do a bit of that which will help but the main thing is making sure your body is always hydrated to its absolute maximum and that's key. If you're not hydrated then you will suffer pretty quickly.

VdG: I think you try to come here as soon as possible to get used to the hot weather. You use a kind of different philosophy with food, you use a lot of salt, you drink a lot during the whole day. I think we drink up to five or six litres, so you pee quite a lot. I quite like the heat so let's see how I feel after the race.

Q: Valtteri, do you get all the secrets handed down from the Finns who have gone before you like Kimi and Mika Hakkinen?

VB: Well, of course, we have the saunas in Finland, so maybe that helps with the heat. I think it's just a hot race and that's the key. No special preparation. Of course try to be outside a lot to get used to it a little bit but in the end the fitter you are the easier time you're going to have in the car.

Q: (Gary Meenaghan - The National) Kimi, just wondering if you got a chance to celebrate the win last Sunday, or if you were on a flight going somewhere? What would you be up to?

KR: I came here directly on Sunday night. For sure, if you want to you can always... it's not about that. I had a flight booked here anyhow so I came here.

Q: What's your view on days when you win, because in sport you have so many days which perhaps don't go quite so well. When you actually win, is it very important to you to be a team, to celebrate with a team, to enjoy the good moments?

KR: No. Like I said, first of all they (the team) are always very busy packing up everything at these kind of races so they don't have so much time either. I had a flight in the evening, so we just had a quick briefing and then I had to go to the hotel to pick up my stuff and go. For sure they had some celebration. It's just one race and hopefully at the end of the year we can have a good celebration.

Q: (Velimir Veljko Jukic - Auto Fokus) We have a couple of rookies here and normally you have reached the first level to the biggest category, but probably there are some big secret wishes which you don't talk about. Would you maybe reveal your secret wish to this audience?

JB: I don't think there are many secrets in Formula One. You just need to work out a lot and be ready for that. I don't see any secrets.

VdG: I think it's a dream come true (to drive in Formula One). You have worked all your life to get here and it's great to be here but to be honest, if you're in the back, some things are different: blue flags, the start is different again, the procedures with the steering wheel. There's a lot of stuff which is quite different to GP2 but I'm enjoying it. The team is letting me learn a lot and I'm making it step by step.

Q: Esteban, you've made it to Formula One but does the journey really begin here?

EG: I think that I try to take a very natural approach, try to see every race as one more race, as if it was back in Formula BMW in 2007... it doesn't really make a difference because that helps me to keep the focus on the most important things. Now, for me, the dream is not only to be in Formula One, the dream is to be successful in Formula One and I want to work my way step-by-step to try to achieve it.

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