

## Sunday press conference

Given the influence of the Mercedes hybrid power unit on the course of the 2014 Formula One season, who better to attend the final press conference than three Mercedes-powered drivers?

Present were Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Felipe Massa (Williams), and Valtteri Bottas (Williams).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Felipe MASSA:** First of all, thank you everybody. Lewis, well done, congratulations, because you deserve it, you did a fantastic championship, your team, so congratulations really. Yeah, it was an incredible race for us. I didn't expect to have that pace and I didn't expect... we were slightly slower than Mercedes but not so much on the same tyres and then I was able to keep the tyres until, not the end, but until a long part of the race and then we were talking to the team. We tried the option, yes, why not, I mean we are here, we have a big gap to the car behind, which was Valtteri, so let's try. We try. Unfortunately, Lewis was a little bit too far but I wanted so much that victory. We were close and I hope that's just the beginning for next year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**LH:** It's very hard to soak all this up. When you're going through the race, when you're coming here this weekend, there's so much pressure from around you, you're just trying to ignore it, trying to keep your eye on the ball. Coming in today... Niki was right, I didn't sleep last night. I went to bed at about 1am and woke up at like 5am this morning and I went for a run this morning and a massage and everything and I thought for sure I'm going to be tired when it gets to the race but somehow I felt composed and my family came and surprised me at breakfast, which was really a great thing. I wanted them to be here but I just knew how intense the weekend would be and I didn't know if I was going to have time to give them any time. I didn't want to finish the day or the weekend saying 'I wish did that or I wish I did that'. This has been an incredible year. I just cannot believe how amazing

this has all been. Coming to this team last year, the decision to come here, when a lot of people said it was the wrong choice. The steps we took last year and then coming into this year, it was just unbelievable and then again, as I said, the fan support has been phenomenal. I never in a million years thought I'd have that kind of support, so as I said before, this is the greatest moment in my life. It's very hard to... it feels very surreal. It feels like an out-of-body experience. I feel like I'm back here watching this going on, it's not really happening. So I'm going to really make sure I gift my thanks and count my blessings.

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

**FM:** Yeah, I think today was an emotional day, to see what we achieve during the whole season, the whole championship. Not just me but also the team. It's fantastic to be part of it. It's fantastic to be inside a big evolution inside a team. Definitely we lost so much points this year. It would have been completely the end of the championship if I had the normal season, the normal first half of the season that I expected but I think today it was so nice to see that we are there, we can win the race, we can fight for victory, we can fight hopefully for championships but it shows we are there, shows that we didn't forget how to win. I think, for me, that's what counts at the end. Such a difficult time for so long, you know, and we're still there. When we had the opportunity, we're there to fight for the victory and I think that's what makes me proud and makes me happy and makes me even more motivated to carry on and to push hard every day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**LH:** Well, 2007 was a very bad experience, obviously losing the championship I fell to a low that I couldn't control and 2008 came back, fighting in the championship, Felipe won the race, won the championship for a second and then obviously what happened in the last corner, I got it back and for me I'd lost it, won it, lost it and, whilst it was a great experience, my emotions were shot. I don't know, that year, I was just immature. I didn't have the knowledge that I have now. Didn't approach the race the same as I did today. Today I went in... normally you go in butterflies in the stomach, a bit

nervous, today I was going into the race thinking 'I feel extremely calm', which is really weird. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Obviously it was a really good thing. Last night sitting there thinking, Jeez, tomorrow is the day. We could go into the race, something could happen to the car and that would be the championship done. Naturally just thinking of all the negative things possible, y'know? And working really hard to bring the positives into it. I brought that today. I think really that knowledge and experience got me through the race today. Looking after the car. Battling to the point where I'd got the championship in a good position and then, obviously it helped that Nico's car was not performing properly so, when he fell out of the points, I knew that I could fight with Felipe and... yeah... that was the most fulfilling experience I have to say.

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

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

**Q: (Nawied Jabarkhy1 – Gulf News Broadcasting) Lewis, coming into this weekend, there was a lot of talk about your personal relationship with Nico Rosberg. Now that it's all over, how are you going to take that forward and the history that you have, what's your relationship going to be like going forward. What's your thoughts on it?**

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

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

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

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

**LH:** Yeah. Well, Spa was a low moment. It was a very difficult scenario to be in and going back years ago, I wouldn't have reacted the way I did this year. I would have chosen another way which wouldn't have been a positive and I guess with age, as I said, and just maturing and having a different perspective on life, I think I handled it a different way, I really thought for the following days and really turned my focus to a different area. I came back to the next races with a slightly different approach and I won't explain exactly what I did because I need to bring it to the next races next year but I did tweak some of my approach throughout the weekend which helped me get those wins. I've still got some improvements to make, qualifying was good this year but could be better. It would make it much easier if I could get qualifying sorted because the race pace is very much there. Inside the team? Nothing really changed, I don't believe. The team has been amazing. It's been very hard for them. They've wanted both of us to win, having to be very balanced but ultimately they've done an exceptional job. It is a great group of people in this team; there's a lot of love in this team, a lot of passion and it's been a real privilege to work with these people.

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

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

**FM:** Yeah, I did.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**LH:** Yeah, I mean to Ross, to Norbert Haug, to Niki, to Dieter, to all the board members, the belief that they've had in me, particularly when I got into Formula One... I signed with McLaren and then Ron and Norbert gave the go-ahead for me to get the seat. Coming in to this team, as I said to you, Ross

really sold it to me. He came with his laptop, sat and had tea with me which was just surreal to see because I've been watching TV for years, seeing the success that he had, thinking 'oh my God, Ross, he wants me. Before he wanted Michael and now he wants me' which is a very strange situation to be in and I'm forever grateful. I wish him a huge happy birthday. He invited me, obviously I'm here so can't go but I will definitely probably speak to him later today but I'm really grateful for him wanting me to be in the team and the other members really being so supportive to being in this team because they wanted to win and it felt that I would be a perfect fit. I think we've proved that he was right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Race report

Lewis Hamilton won the Abu Dhabi season finale in style on Sunday night, taking the chequered flag as both race winner and champion of the 2014 FIA Formula One World Championship.

Start as you mean to continue, they say, and Hamilton's start was as emphatic a claim on the drivers' title as any move the Mercedes driver has made all year. With two Silver Arrows on the front row of the Yas Marina grid, Hamilton needed to get ahead of his teammate and only championship rival if he was to claim the crown. And get ahead he did, accelerating into Turn 1 at such high speed his W05 may as well have been rocket-powered.

Nico Rosberg gave chase in the early phase of the race, but was unable to get within overtaking range of his teammate at any point during the twilight grand prix, with or without DRS. But on lap 25 it became clear that fate was playing into Hamilton's hands - having started the season with a 25-point advantage thanks to Hamilton's retirement in Melbourne, Rosberg bookended a season of Mercedes reliability issues when he lost first ERS and then the bulk of his power.

Having been running in a comfortable second place until that point - not enough to secure the title, but a respectable end to the season - Rosberg fell further and further back, eventually crossing the finish line one lap down on his teammate and out of the points. The team attempted to get their driver to retire his ailing car in the closing laps, but the racer replied that he wanted to see out his season in the cockpit, not from the garage.

It was not all plain sailing for Hamilton, who slowed dramatically in the middle sector of the race, having turned down his engine to safeguard against similar issues affecting his championship. When the team restored the Briton to full power, it was Hamilton who asked them to turn the wick back down to ensure he was able to take the chequered flag in whatever position the car was capable of.

Elsewhere in the pack it was Williams who continued to impress, ending their turnaround season with a double podium and only two or three laps shy of a potential race win for Felipe Massa, the only man on track able to make Hamilton sweat during the 55 laps of Sunday's race. After a poor start, Valtteri Bottas performed admirably to claw his way back up to a podium finish despite issues with clutch slip, carving his way back up through the field in style. The Finnish racer was able to get - and stay - ahead of Daniel Ricciardo in the closing stage of the race while nursing some very old rubber.

Two more men to battle through the pack in style were pitlane starters Ricciardo and Sebastian Vettel, with the Australian taking the chequered flag in fourth place, just shy of ten seconds behind Bottas. Ricciardo was also half of one of the cleanest battles of the race, fighting hard and well with Jean-Eric Vergne in a wheel-to-wheel dice on laps 12 and 13. Vettel, who had a more difficult race and lost time stuck behind Fernando Alonso - irony of 2010 ironies - was only able to work his way up to eighth.

Jenson Button did an excellent job to finish fifth in what is likely to be his last grand prix, comfortably ahead of both Fernando Alonso and Kevin Magnussen, the two men forcing him into an unwanted retirement from the sport.

There were three retirements from the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Daniil Kvyat lost all power from his Toro Rosso on lap 16, but was able to stop on an access road and did not bring out the Safety Car. Pastor Maldonado's race ended far more dramatically on lap 28, flames pouring from the back end of his Lotus as the camera panned to his team garage, where the mechanics were in stitches. The final man not to see the chequered flag was Kamui Kobayashi, who was wheeled into the garage and out of the grand prix on lap 42.

### Abu Dhabi Grand Prix race result

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1h39m02.619s
2. Felipe Massa (Williams) + 2.576s
3. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 28.880s
4. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) + 37.237s
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1m00.334s
6. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) + 1m02.148s
7. Sergio Perez (Force India) + 1m11.060s
8. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) + 1m12.045s
9. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 1m25.813s
10. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) + 1m27.820s
11. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) + 1m30.376s
12. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 1m31.947s
13. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 1 lap
14. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 1 lap
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1 lap
16. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) + 1 lap
17. Will Stevens (Caterham) + 1 lap

## Saturday press conference

It is somewhat fitting that the final post-qualifying press conference of the 2014 season featured the three faces most often in attendance over the course of the year.

Present were Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), and Valtteri Bottas (Williams).

**Q: Nico, three poles in a row now at the end of the season and I guess you have the vital advantage going into tomorrow's grand prix. How do you feel about that?**

**Nico ROSBERG:** Yeah, it was a great day again today I'm sure. I'm thankful to the engineers and everything, because [they] did a good job, sorted out the car, you know, I was really happy with the set-up. It all worked out well. I got a good lap together in the end: I'm pleased with that. But, of course, it's only one step, a very small step, because this weekend it's about the championship, not about pole position or anything. Of course, I was hoping, you know, who knows... Valtteri said he got his perfect lap together, so there wasn't anything else in that. Of course it would have been great if somehow there could have been a Williams between the two of us, but that can always happen tomorrow. For sure, starting first is a great place to be and it should be a good start.

**Q: I guess the crucial question is how are you going to play the first corner tomorrow?**

**NR:** Yes, that's going to be interesting, as always. But I'm on the clean side I think, I'm not sure. Maybe none of them are really clean, not sure, but anyways I have the advantage from pole, so that should be OK.

**Q: Lewis, is it the case that the driver who made the fewest mistakes eventually came out on top at the end?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** I don't know. I don't know how many mistakes Nico made but I generally didn't have the best of laps but it was still a really good qualifying session, I really enjoyed it. The car was fantastic. So, as Nico was saying, tomorrow is the special day.

**Q: Does it matter? At the end of the day you only need to finish second to win the title but how are you going to approach it tomorrow and again the same questions as to Nico, how will you approach that first corner?**

**LH:** Same as every time.

**Q: OK, let's move on to Valtteri. Valtteri, well done, another top three. Do you think you're fast enough to mix it with the two Mercedes drivers in tomorrow's grand prix?**

**Valtteri BOTTAS:** Thanks, yeah, it was a nice quali and especially the lap in the end, the car felt pretty good and I got a really good lap in the end. That felt nice because Felipe was really quick today as well, so it was not easy to beat him. Yeah, it's good to be third and fourth again. I think in the race, as we've seen before, Mercedes is normally having a bit more advantage on Sundays than Saturdays, so it could be difficult, but for us the main target is to finish as high as possible and if something is going to happen and if we have the pace there is no doubt we are going to try to move forward.

**Q: And what are you going to do into the first corner tomorrow?**

**VB:** Same as usual really, just trying to gain any positions if there are possibilities but in the end the race is never won in the first corner, so that's good to remember. So this race is no different to any other for me.

**Q: Back to you Nico, a unique situation tomorrow, double points on offer for the first time. Your thoughts going into the race, and your mindset?**

**NR:** Well, the mindset is that I need to get the job done and continue on the sort of form that I had in Brazil in the race. I'm sure it's going to be a great battle between the two of us. Of course I hope for more than that - not just the win but some sort of help from Lewis, or anything, I don't know... I mean I offered Valtteri... I'm paying [for] a wellness night [for him] tonight, a spa session, all-inclusive, hoping that he can be in extra special form and do the impossible tomorrow.

**Q: Nico, you came here wanting pole position, you've done it. Just tell us what kind of statement you think your qualifying has made this year.**

**NR:** Of course yes, qualifying was one of the strengths this year but that's only... it's not even half of it on a weekend, just the first step into every race weekend. It's Sunday that counts and that's where I've looked to improve a little bit recently, like in Interlagos for example where I managed to do the step - and that's what I need to do again tomorrow.

**Q: Lewis, in a similar situation in Austin, you tried to pass and pulled it off spectacularly; in Brazil you didn't get a chance to try the pass. Which of those is it going to be tomorrow?**

**LH:** I don't know. We'll see.

**Q: What are your feelings though in terms of the way you're going to conduct the race? Are you going to...**

**LH:** Same as always.

**Q: Valtteri, the 12th top three qualifying this season for Williams. It was a difficult start to this weekend for the Williams team, particularly in free practice one. Tell us about how you built up the speed this weekend.**

**VB:** Well yeah, we only really had one real issue this weekend, it was the thing with the bodywork. We tried something different, it failed but it's good we tried it in Practice One. It was no drama, everything was all set for Practice Two and everything went into the plan. And yeah, Practice Three the car felt OK but we still knew that adjusting some things we could get more out of it for qualifying and still not compromising the set-up for the race, so pretty normal weekend. Normally Friday we'd not be looking so good so pretty normal weekend so far for us. We've done a solid job but, like always, it's tomorrow that really matters.

**Q: (Ralf Bach - Sport Bild) Question to Lewis. How many risks will you take tomorrow at the start to keep Valtteri behind you?**

**LH:** I don't know. I'm looking forwards, so just drive the same as I always drive.

**Q: (Haoran Zhou - FI Express) Question for Lewis. If you can pick a fight tomorrow, who is safer? Fight with Nico or fight with Valtteri? To you.**

**LH:** Neither is safer, they're both just as safe.

**Q: (Heikki Kulta - Turun Sanomat) Valtteri, do you feel any kind of extra pressure now that you are some kind of factor in this championship fight?**

**VB:** No, not at all. I think it's kind of cool if I can be part of something. It's nice. Obviously for me the maximum I can get at the moment is fourth place in the championship and the main thing for us as a team is definitely securing the third place - and that's our target tomorrow and to achieve that our goal tomorrow is finish as high as possible where we can. So no different race to any other for me.

**Q: (Dan Knutson - Auto Action / National Speedsport News) Valtteri, qualifying started at 5pm like the race tomorrow. During that hour, do the track**

### conditions change much?

**VB:** Quite a bit, yeah. The temperature is definitely still dropping. The air temperature and also the track temperature so that affects how the tyres are behaving so, you know, for the tyre life of the tyre it should only get easier to us end of the race. So maybe at the end of the race everyone can see bit longer stints than in the beginning. That's the main thing really. And if some people are struggling with the cooling of the car, that should be a bit easier in the end of the race.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globo.com) Lewis, this is not your style when you don't fight. You have to go to the fight. Do you consider, maybe, in this specific race, to race for second place, that would be enough for you?**

**LH:** I don't know. We'll see. You're right, it's not my style, so we'll decide tomorrow.

**Q: (Chris Medland – crash.net) Nico, Lewis was saying that he didn't really get a lap together today, he made a few mistakes in qualifying. Do you feel that that is a sign of the pressure, that you're handling it better so far this weekend?**

**NR:** I don't know. Of course pressure is one of the hopes that I have. If Lewis feels the pressure and here makes a mistake as a result, a bit like today – I haven't seen it – but if you're saying that and a bit like Brazil and that's the sort of opportunities that I'm looking for and I'm trying to push for. I push flat out, all the time to try and keep the level extremely high and that's all I can do really and try and go for the win and keep the pressure on.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – Globo.com) Valtteri, if you overtake one of the Mercedes cars, do you think it's realistic to keep one of them behind you during the race?**

**VB:** Well, yeah, it's difficult to say now. We will see tomorrow. Sometimes this season it's been difficult to predict in detail about the race pace and how we're going to be, how the tyres are going to behave, how long stints we can do, there's a lot of factors. We've seen that we have quick straightline speeds normally, so that normally helps us defending, so that's on our side I think. But it's really difficult to say, we'll see tomorrow.

**Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Nico, how intensely is your father living this weekend? Is he supporting you all the time, or how does he do it?**

**NR:** Yeah, of course my family is intensely watching and I'm sure it's as nerve-wracking for them and intense as it is for all of us here and that's great to know that they're supporting me and also my Dad wrote me... or we had a discussion about it. He gave me his advice for this weekend and I try and apply that or take whatever I think would help me and that's it really.

**Q: (Phillip Merrell – AMEInfo.com) Lewis, how does this finale compare to 2008, given your position and the double points system?**

**LH:** I don't really remember much from 2008 but obviously it was a great season and this is a lot different, just much older and hopefully wiser and I've learned a lot along the way. Yeah, it's a great battle. Obviously it's different when you're racing your teammate to racing someone from another team but just as exciting.

**Q: (Chris Medland – crash.net) Lewis, what's the over-riding emotion for you after qualifying with the gap you've got to Nico? Are you just happy to be in P2 and where you need to be or are you disappointed with your performance?**

**LH:** I'm not particularly disappointed with it. Of course you always want to be on pole, that's what we work for. I've had very good pace throughout practice and particularly the long runs which is comforting and then in Q1, Q2 was good, Q3 just wasn't... didn't really put a comfortable lap together but it wasn't really lots of mistakes or anything, it just wasn't a great lap. Nico did a great job but we're still there for the fight tomorrow.

## Saturday report

After Lewis Hamilton dominated the first two practice sessions of the Abu Dhabi race weekend it was Nico Rosberg who topped the timesheets in FP3, the 0.369s margin between the Mercedes pair setting the scene for a tense qualifying at Yas Marina.

When qualifying got underway it was to falling light and falling temperatures, with the air at 26 degrees and the track at 32 degrees.

Unusually, Mercedes started Q1 on the supersoft compound, with Hamilton and Rosberg crossing the line split by 0.101s, with Hamilton in the lead. An early third was Valtteri Bottas, with the Williams driver one second behind Rosberg. Behind Bottas it was Daniil Kvyat who was best of the rest, with Felipe Massa giving chase in P5, 0.005s adrift of the Toro Rosso.

As has become usual over the course of the season, it was the Red Bull pair who were last out of the pits, with Sebastian Vettel waiting until Q1 was half run before setting off for his first timed lap. Daniel Ricciardo followed shortly behind.

Vettel's first lap was a P4-worthy 1m42.495s, while Ricciardo demoted his departing teammate, posting a 1m42.204s effort that saw him slot in behind Rosberg. With times on the board from all 20 runners it was the driver pairings from Ferrari and Marussia that were in the dropout zone alongside Jenson Button.

Fernando Alonso jumped up into the top ten before being knocked into P11 by Kimi Raikkonen. Replacing the Ferraris in the danger zone were Sauber's Adrian Sutil and Esteban Gutierrez, while Button went top three and put Pastor Maldonado into the bottom five in the process. The final seconds saw all change on the timesheets, with the five Q1 losers set as Romain Grosjean - who has a 20-place grid penalty - Gutierrez, Maldonado, Kamui Kobayashi, and Will Stevens.

As Q2 got underway it was clear the pressure was beginning to have an effect on Rosberg, who had an error-strewn first timed lap during which the Mercedes driver ran off at Turn 9, crossing the line a full 13 seconds behind pace-setter Hamilton. But take two was far smoother, and a 1m41.459s effort put Rosberg in P2, only half a second shy of his championship rival.

With six minutes left on the clock neither McLaren had set a time, and Button was being wheeled back into the team garage with an overheating and underfuelled car, creating concern that he would be unable to take part in Q2 during what is looking like being the Briton's last grand prix. The top five was comprised of Hamilton, Rosberg, Bottas, Massa, and Ricciardo, with Bottas and Rosberg split by 0.006s.

As the chequered flag fell to mark the end of Q2 it was all change in the dropout zone and at the top, with Bottas splitting the Mercedes pair before Massa pushed the Finn into P3 and Rosberg down to fourth. Knocked out were Kevin Magnussen, Jean-Eric Vergne, Sergio Perez, Nico Hulkenberg, and Sutil. Button was able to set a top ten-worthy lap when his McLaren was refuelled, giving him the chance to complete a full final weekend.

As the final top ten shoot-out of 2014 got underway, all eyes were on the Mercedes garage, trying to determine whether Rosberg had cracked under the pressure of needing to secure pole to give him the best possible chance of claiming his debut championship. The half-second gap between the Silver Arrows drivers at the end of Q2 was a larger margin than anyone had anticipated.

All barring Raikkonen poured out of the pit lane as soon as it opened to mark the beginning of Q3, and the supersoft compound was the order of the dusk. Alonso ran wide at Turn 1 beginning his first timed effort, and it was the Williams pair who set the first representative times with a 1m41.119s for Massa and 1m41.321s for Bottas.

Rosberg drew first blood when he claimed provisional pole with a 1m40.697s lap, with Hamilton setting 1m41.021s after making an error on his first timed lap. With six minutes on the clock it was a straight fight between the Mercedes pair in an all-or-nothing battle to the finish. Raikkonen remained in the garage, with no time set and less than four minutes in which to cross the line.

Round two saw Rosberg the first Merc out of the pits, with Hamilton 30 seconds behind. Raikkonen started his one-shot effort with 75 seconds left on the clock, a time when the track was heavy with cars. Rosberg retained pole with a 1m40.480s lap, 0.386s faster than Hamilton's final effort, and it was an all-Mercedes front row.

### Provisional grid

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m40.480s
2. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m450.866s
3. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m41.025s
4. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m41.119s
5. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m41.267s
6. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m41.893s
7. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m41.908s
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m41.964s
9. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m42.236s
10. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m42.866s
  
11. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m42.198s
12. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m42.207s
13. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m42.239s
14. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m42.384s
15. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m43.074s
  
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m42.819s
17. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m42.860s
18. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m44.540s
19. Will Stevens (Caterham) 1m45.095s
20. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m42.768s \*

\* Romain Grosjean qualified in P16, but will start from P20 following a 20-place grid penalty for a sixth new power unit.

## Friday press conference

The final team principals press conference of the 2014 season saw much discussion of the future, with an understandable focus on financing, regulatory power, and engine options.

Present were Federico Gastaldi (Lotus), Christian Horner (Red Bull), Marco Mattoacci (Ferrari), Finbarr O'Connell (Caterham), Otnar Szafnauer (Force India), Claire Williams (Williams), and Toto Wolff (Mercedes).

**Q: Toto, we have to start with you. Obviously the showdown this weekend between your two drivers Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg; how tense is the atmosphere in the garage this weekend and how do you feel about today's performance?**

**Toto WOLFF:** Hi everybody. The tension is on I would say, and it is pretty normal. It has come to the last race now, it's between the two of them, it's the all-defining, decision-making race and it's pretty normal. I wouldn't say that there is more tension than expected in the garage. There is a good spirit. Today was a good day. It might sound a bit boring but we did our programme, lots of running. We did the long runs we expected so all OK for Friday.

**Q: Now I don't know if you know this but the last time that one engine maker managed to take every pole position during a season was back in 1969. How does it feel to be on the verge of that particular record?**

**TW:** I wasn't so much into statistics before this season but breaking these kind of records is a great achievement for the team and makes me really proud. I remember when I was a child the McLaren records, these orange and white cars would dominate everything and now us being in such a position and having equalled those records and beaten some of the records is very satisfying indeed.

**Q: Thank you for that, Finbarr, coming to you. At the other end of the grid, obviously your team is also in the spotlight this weekend. Can you give us an idea of the logistics of getting the team here this weekend?**

**Finbarr O'CONNELL:** Yes, it's been absolutely crazy. I think about two-and-a-half weeks ago I met all the employees of the Caterham company. They weren't my employees at the time, I wasn't even appointed to IMRT at that stage. And we just spoke about the position they were in and how they hadn't heard anything from IMRT. We moved from that to a couple of days later thinking if we could get here and actually showcase the team, show the world it was still there and needed new ownership that I would have a much better chance of getting someone in to buy it, to thinking up the idea of going for the crowd funding - we got 6,500 fans and supporters who have put money in there and huge support from the all of the people we work with, and that's basically Red Bull and Renault, Pirelli, Dell and Total as well. With their support we've raised the money, raised the support, amazing. We've signed a new English driver, which is extremely exciting as well. We're there today. Our purpose here to show people we are here. We're not a blank canvas, but we are an operational team that somebody can effectively buy an F1 team off the shelf and become part of the most amazing club in the world I would say.

**Q: The other half of that question is, how optimistic are you that you will find a buyer? Have you got any interested buyers that you think might come through?**

**FOC:** Yeah, I've got a number of people who could acquire. It's just persuading people to make that decision. It's a huge acquisition decision because of everything... everybody knows what you have to do, those budgets you have to meet etc etc. But we have people who could do it and with the achievements we've had up until now I really hope and believe we're going to get there.

**Q: Thank you very much, Claire, coming to you. A slightly tricky start to free practice one for the Williams team. Do you think you have the pace though to get involved at the front?**

**Claire WILLIAMS:** We have to; we don't have a choice. We're here to secure P3 in the championship and with the double points that's going to be even harder for us. We do always tend to have, not a difficult Friday, certainly not as strange as the one we had today but we've resolved the problem. So we're looking forward to going into qualifying tomorrow. We've just got to do the job on Sunday and that's all that we're focused on.

**Q: You've had the second-fastest car very often this season. Do you think it should have been quick enough to have finished second in the**

**championship rather than third and what have you got in the pipeline to try to move things forward for next year?**

**CW:** I think Red Bull have done a great job, as you would expect them to do. We didn't start really scoring the points or the podiums that we needed to in order to take that challenge to them until much later on in the season. To make that transition, to make that jump that we've done this year, from where we were last year in P9 and then to take that up to P3, I think the team can be really proud of the job we've done. And, you know, moving forward it's just about making sure that we can sustain that position and to be closing the gap to Mercedes next year and to Red Bull and to hopefully taking the challenge to them.

**Q: OK, thank you. Marco, obviously this weekend you have announced the departure of Fernando Alonso and the arrival of Sebastian Vettel. Can you say a few words about both situations and why you feel that Vettel is the right man for you going forward?**

**Marco MATTIACCI:** First, we need to thank Fernando for all he has done for us, what we have done together over the last five years. But at the same time it is clear to everybody that we want both to open new cycles but it was important to do it with the utmost motivation and commitment. With Sebastian we get one of the youngest world champions ever, four championships. I met him personally in the last few months. He is an extremely hard-working guy, humble, disciplined. I'm sure he will bring the phenomenal experience that he went through Red Bull and the enthusiasm needed to go through certain difficult moments that are waiting for us, but again sharing the overall project that I think is to go back to the top.

**Q: It's been quite a year for you. Twelve months ago you were in America thinking a 2014...**

**MM:** Seven months ago I was in America!

**Q: Exactly! You were then thinking about selling road cars and now you find yourself here at the end of your first part season as a team principal. What have you learned from this whirlwind year?**

**TW:** He hopes to wake up from this nightmare!

**MM:** (Laughs) No, the intensity, the complexity but also the incredible amount of talented people that are in Formula One. How amazing is this sport, that is a global platform, the visibility that specifically in my case I don't like for myself, but which is a consequence of the job. But it's definitely the pinnacle of motor sport. The level of competition, aggression is really high, so a lot to learn, but at the same time I think I brought understanding of people, choosing the right people and from here how to create an organisation for the future.

**Q: Thank you very much. Christian, I guess the other half of the question I just put to Marco a moment ago. Obviously this is Sebastian's final race for Red Bull Racing. Your feelings on losing him to Ferrari and what you've achieved together and any lingering sadness or regret about this?**

**Christian HORNER:** Obviously we've had a wonderful relationship with Sebastian. He's been with the Red Bull family since he was 12 years of age. He's grown through the junior programme, through the junior categories, into his opportunity in Formula One with Toro Rosso, winning a grand prix in Toro Rosso and then coming to Red Bull Racing. Four world championships and 38 grand prix victories later I think we can look back with a huge amount of pride. We've grown together. He came to the team, which was still a young team at the time, and together we've grown into a race-winning and championship-winning combination. But as in life all things move on and evolve. Obviously this opportunity has come up for Seb, he's felt it's the right time for him and I think probably in reality it's the right time for the team too. Whilst we'll be very sorry to him go and close his career with Red Bull on Sunday evening, we'll wish him the very best of luck and he'll be a good friend of the team for life and as of the first of January he's a competitor. Obviously more than that, I think it's not just the experiences you share on track, we've got some wonderful memories from this circuit, it's outside the cockpit and as not much more than a boy when he arrived, he now leaves us a young man, as a father and he can be incredibly proud of what he's achieved and I think he's been a tremendous ambassador for the sport and we'll certainly miss him.

**Q: Well Daniel Ricciardo is going to be third in the championship, with three wins this season. He now becomes the team leader, how do you feel about that: him as your man going forward?**

**CH:** I think Daniel has had the most amazing year this season. I think that anybody that could have predicted the performance from Daniel... we couldn't have predicted it, I don't think even he could. The way he has raced, the way he has driven this year has been outstanding. I think that what he has done on track, he deserves that third place. He's the only driver to have beaten a Mercedes driver this year and he's done it three times so far. So obviously we're hoping for some kind of misdemeanor between the two Mercedes drivers and a huge points deduction and Daniel to be crowned world champion but obviously that's rather unlikely in the circumstances we've got.

**Q: Thank you. Otmar coming to you. You're running Jolyon Palmer next week, the GP2 champion, in the test here at Abu Dhabi. Is he under consideration for something in 2015?**

**Otmar SZAFNAUER:** That's not the purpose for running him. Shortly, maybe even later on this weekend, we'll announce our full driver line-up. It's for the future. As you know we've run young drivers in the past. We've often run them in F1 even during the season to help out. Jolyon having won the GP2 championship, we thought he'd be a good driver for us to run in the test post this weekend. He's driven our simulator and has performed very well. We also want to see how that correlates to track performance but we anticipate he will do a good job for us. It's also a test for us, so we need good feedback from him as well.

**Q: Going into this weekend, yourselves, Lotus and Sauber called for a meeting on revenue sharing. Where are you at with those discussions?**

**OS:** Fortunately I haven't been in any of those meetings, so it's hard for me to answer that question. I focus on other things at the team - mainly performance and seeing how we can compete with some of these people behind me and that's what I'll be doing this weekend.

**Q: Thank you. Federico, same question to you really. What are your feelings on the financial discussions going on at the moment?**

**Federico GASTALDE:** Well, to be honest, Gerard [Lopez] has been involved in dealing and wheeling and leading with the rest of the guys all the conversations, all the meetings with Mr Ecclestone. So it's up to them, they are putting together a programme that they are working with, so not much to say, obviously.

**Q: On the young driver front, Esteban Ocon ran for you this morning in F1. How did he do and what plans do you have for him?**

**FG:** Well, we're very happy because he comes from Gravity's young driver programme and he won the FIA F3 championship and we are now looking to put him on the next step, so we are trying to work out on the GP2 team programme for next year, we are talking to different teams at the moment. So very pleased with the experience this morning so we will see how it goes next week in the test.

**Q: (Joe Saward - Grand Prix Special) I'd like to know from all of you what you consider the demographic of your target audience in Formula One, both in terms of sex and age, and geographic location? Marco?**

**MM:** I know where you are going but to be honest, you know, as Toto was saying my previous background is on the car side, selling cars, and I met a lot of customers that told me they decided to dream of Ferrari when they were between eight or 10 years old, when they had the first poster hanging in their room or watching Gilles Villeneuve racing. I think it depends on the purpose, it depends on the objective. But for an aspirational brand like Ferrari definitely our demographic is from the moment they can switch on TV or they can enter in a Ferrari store until when they can afford a car. Our brand is more a culture, a passion, so we really don't have that kind of segmentation less than we discuss about when we sell cars, but Formula One is a great platform to attract, to engage with a wide range of audience. The sooner we start that engagement, the sooner we start that connection, because you can foster and nurture that kid to become someone in the Ferrari family. Geographically, today, as Ferrari we are in almost 65 countries, so we target the world, that's why I think Formula One is a great platform. Female, male, I don't think it's a debate for us, we sell cars to everybody, that's not under discussion.

**Q: Toto?**

**TW:** There's not a lot to add actually to what Marco said. I think it needs early education that this is the highest form of competition with cars and



obviously for Mercedes this is important as well. Educate the children and you grow them into being customers and understanding that Mercedes is successful on the racing track in Formula One and, yeah, what Marco said.

**Q: Christian, obviously Red Bull is a fairly youth-oriented brand?**

**CH:** Yeah, Red Bull is very much about youth and absolutely the team has a huge following from the youth segment, that's male or female it's irrelevant of sex, or age or race, it's a sport as well that is accessible to everybody. I know where Joe's question is getting at and the comments it's referring to but what you have to remember is that when you're 84, a 70-year-old is still pretty young.

**Q: Otmar?**

**OS:** Well, our brands on the car are varied and, like Christian says, Red Bull focuses on the young and ours might be a little bit older than that. We have Smirnoff and Kingfisher so there's some age restrictions on drinking some of those products, so we're focussed on a bit older – but maybe not 70. We also have Claro and Telcel and teenagers these days are on the phone all the time so, we've got a varied audience that follows the team.

**Q: Finbarr, anything to add?**

**FOC:** I think all I would say is that we've got the Renault engine and the Red Bull gears and that's what people associate with our car and the name, a number of people I'm talking to have said that they would probably change the name if they acquired the team, so I think it is just at the moment the Renault engine and the Red Bull.

**Q: Federico?**

**FG:** Well, we're not a car manufacturer as everyone knows but we are linked to very big sponsors that actually are linked with the youth market so yes, we need to try to educate as soon as possible the next generations in order to make sure that we are all in the same boat.

**Q: And final word on this subject from Claire.**

**CW:** Not a lot – except that we're not discriminatory. We want everyone to love Williams and we want everyone to love Formula One.

**Q: (Jerome Pugmire – AP) Question for Toto. Yesterday there appeared to be some tension here between Lewis and Nico – is there any message that you're going to give to them before the race tomorrow? What will you say to them?**

**TW:** No. I think at that stage the team doesn't need to interfere anymore in the relationship between the two. It's down to them, we need to give them the best car so that they can fight it out on track. It makes no sense to try to pretend a... schmoozing – it that how you say it? – environment. They are out there to win the World Championship. It's man against man and the tension is there, all in a respectful manner.

**Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / National Speedsport News) Finbarr, what will a buyer get besides the entry? Will they get the factory, equipment? And will they have to assume some or all of the debt outstanding?**

**FOC:** They will get the factory, equipment, the entry. Any purchaser will then have to enter into negotiations with all the race partners. This car, as I said earlier, is linked into Renault and to Red Bull. Pirelli is clearly an important race partner for us, and also Dell, so it will have to enter into discussions with all those people.

**Q: And the debt?**

**FOC:** Well, that will be a matter of discussion with all of those as regards, this will be a new relationship and how do both parties see that relationship going. And I think depending on the answer to that question will be the answer to the first question.

**Q: (Kate Walker – crash.net) I have a question for the members of the strategy group. We're now coming to the end of the first season where you've had significant input and we had a number of misses in terms of things of overthrowing cost control, the radio communications flip-flop. I was wondering first what the long-term strategy you guys had for the sport: what it was, how you see it, and secondly, what role the strategy group has a regulatory body?**

**CH:** Lovely to get all the easy questions. I think that, look the strategy group is a forum to sit down and discuss the bigger issues. Y'know, we've done that, we haven't always agreed – obviously – this year and of course we have another meeting coming up next week followed by a Formula One Commission meeting. As far as the regulatory value of the strategy group, anything that the strategy group discusses has to still go through the Formula One Commission that every team is represented on, as are the promoters and the FIA, before it's passed into being a regulation. So it's very much a discussion forum. Of course there are some big issues at the moment and y'know, a team like Caterham is in this situation because of the costs. The costs are too high and I think one of the crucial aspects in those costs is the power unit and that's something the strategy group, as well as the other players within Formula One have a duty of care to look at very carefully and I think, whilst probably not a lot can be done for 2015, I think an awful lot can be done for 2016 and maybe we need to even go as far as looking at a different engine, y'know, a new engine. Maybe still a V6 but maybe a more simplified V6 that controls the cost. Cost of development, cost of supply to a team and to the privateer teams. I think that's something we need to have a serious discussion about during the next strategy group.

**Q: Toto, what do you think about that?**

**TW:** On governance, everything has been said. I think that the big teams have a responsibility towards Formula One. We need to be open-minded, we need to discuss, we need to keep the small teams alive, keep the grid together and all that is being addressed. As Mercedes we take that responsibility pretty seriously. We have addressed the issues and will continue to address the issues.

**Q: Marco, do you agree with Christian about maybe looking at a different kind of power unit for 2016?**

**MM:** Definitely we need to look at something different 2016. In terms of power unit and in terms of regulation. 2015 is clear we will have to – at the moment – accept the status quo but definitely we are not going to accept the status quo for 2016. The cost of the power unit is a problem. The fact that we cannot enhance our power unit during the season is a cost for us, for not performing. So, the difficulties that the small teams are facing is an issue on the table – so I think all these problems are very well connected. I think that the strategy group and the F1 Commission are the proper arena where to touch these points trying to find a common direction but, indeed, 2016 is sort-of different.

**Q: Claire, what's your perspective on that?**

**CW:** The strategy group, I think it provides a forum for debate which I think is always sensible in a sport when we haven't had that necessarily before. This year it's obviously been exploratory. It's been its first year and everybody's got their agendas and their own issues that they want to talk about. For Williams, that group, the purpose of it, has always been to ensure the sustainability of our sport. I think we'd like to see more conversations around that. I think with the kind of comments around engines and looking at potentially changing the engines, I think potentially it's too soon but Williams has always been very vocal about our position around cost control. I think that's one of the disappointments for us this year – that the strategy group wasn't able to come to achieve any cost control within Formula One. I think we have to consider very carefully any changes around the power units. We've already ploughed a huge amount of money into them, into developing them. The manufacturers have done that, all the teams have had a... a fifth of our budget is spent on our engine. There are important messages around those engines as well, with their hybrid technologies which are relevant to us and relevant to the sponsors that we're trying to pitch to at the moment. I think making a U-Turn so quickly, I'm not sure is a way we want to go. I'm not sure it puts us in a very credible position. But again, the strategy group is a forum for that debate and one that we'll probably end up having.

**Q: And finally a word from Federico.**

**FG:** All has been said. I think, again, cost control, a cost cap has been a major failure this year. I mean, after all the meetings we have had. On the other

hand, I think that we pretty much should, all the teams here, on each of their capacities to put the best possible... to push for a better situation for all of us and be more secure and more stable in the future.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Based on what's just been said about the strategy group. Claire, you used the word 'forum'. Christian, you used the word 'forum'. You also said that everything that's been discussed needs to go to the Formula One Commission. Claire, you said that consensus wasn't reached on cost controls. If we take these two statements, does this not imply that the strategy group is, in fact, not a forum? Because if it needs to reach consensus, that's not a forum for discussion. But apart from that, looking at it from a legality perspective, if everything needs to go to the Formula One Commission, why did cost control not go to the Formula One Commission if it was, in fact, blocked by the strategy group in the first place.**

**CW:** It's a forum for debate, that's exactly what it is – but there's a process around voting within that group in order to send proposals up to the Commission. FOM have a number of votes, FIA do and the teams as a collective do as well. So if that doesn't reach majority in there, it doesn't go up to the Commission.

**Q: Christian?**

**CH:** I think what you have to remember about the strategy group is that the members of that group are the teams that have given a guarantee that they will be in the sport until 2020 – and so they've got a vested interest and long term interest in the sport being attractive, sustainable and addressing all of those issues. Now, of course, there has to be a process that things are agreed on or disagreed on, otherwise what's the point of that group at all? We have a simple majority basis of it being moved on to the Commission or not. Therefore should a team – even Finbarr will be able to sit on the Commission next week and, if there's something he doesn't like he has the opportunity, certainly for 2015, to either block it or voice his position for 2016.

**Q: Toto?**

**TW:** Nothing to add.

**Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) A question for Mattiacci. What kind of arguments did you use during your meetings with Sebastian Vettel to let him join this new challenge with Ferrari. And what kind of guy is he, in your opinion?**

**MM:** [no sound] ... very straightforward. I think I was really impressed with how clever he is, and being an extremely clever person and with great passion for Ferrari. I think the arguments have to be solid arguments. That was a discussion about the project, the investment, typical when you want to bring in a four time world champion, you don't just over-sell, you talk about a few things.

**Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Christian, sorry to belabor the point but you said that Finbarr can actually vote for/against something at the Formula One Commission next week. If it doesn't reach it because it's been blocked by the strategy group, how could he for example, vote for or against cost control because it didn't reach the Formula One Commission, having been blocked before then?**

**CH:** Well, each team obviously participates in different forums as well for items to arrive in the strategy group. So, there are discussion forums where issues can be discussed, whether that's technical or sporting, before it gets to the strategy group but the strategy group are the teams that have given a parent-company guarantee to be in the sport for the long term, up to a minimum of 2020. I think they're the teams that do have the right to say, potentially, what the future does hold, that have a responsibility strategically, to discuss where or not the sport should go. Obviously there are some big issues on the table at the moment.

**Q: (Walter Koster – Saabrucker Zeitung) Mr Wolff, how do you appreciate the share of Mercedes success in person under the management of Ross Brawn, and your time, your start and the team. Secondly, how does the team celebrate the title Sunday evening, and why without winner T-shirts?**

**TW:** Welcome back to the press conference! Ross had a big influence in the team. When he joined the team in 2010, or when he took it over into the Mercedes era, it went through a couple of difficult years but then he initiated the first crucial steps of what we see today, the success we see today. So, he has played a very important role in this year's success. In terms of the winners T-shirt, we will have a driver who is going to win the world championship and a driver who is going to come second. I think through the year as a team we have tried to balance it out between the two of them and keep it neutral. They are valuable members of the team, we are going to continue with them next year, and although we are going to honour and celebrate the world championship-winning driver, you need to respect that, for the other guy, it's going to be a very difficult day in his life. This is why we would like to maintain our role as being fairly neutral in that situation.

**Q: (Hoaran Zhou – FI Express) Two questions, both for Toto, Christian and Marco. The first one is, do you have a deadline on the engine freeze because now it's effectively the end of November and you can't release a press release on December 31 at 11.59pm, can you? The second question is now the first year of the V6 turbo hybrid has passed, you've gathered enough data. Can you give us a figure as to how much fuel-saving has been done through the combustion engine and how much fuel-saving is done through the hybrid part, because Toyota, this year, in the World Endurance Championship has shown that a nice-sounding, naturally aspirated engine, partnered with a huge hybrid can give topline performance and good fuel efficiency?**

**TW:** I have a difficult one. There is a governance in place, a governance states a certain timing, the timing is clear for 2015. For 2016, power unit regulation changes, that needs to happen until March 1, so that's 2015, March 1 2016. The answer to your second question is, I can't really tell you the exact percentage. What we can see is that the development on the internal combustion engine and on the hybrid system has been tremendous this year, with the fuel reduction of a third. We've had almost equal performance today, comparing free practice one to free practice one last year in Abu Dhabi with a car that has been sized down in aerodynamic performance so that is a pretty impressive performance.

**Q: Marco, any thoughts on deadlines with regards to the engines?**

**MM:** Let's say at the moment we are targeting what the regulations are telling us so we are working on what governance, as Toto was saying, has suggested, so there is no difference to what we did this year.

**Q: And do you have a view on the amount of fuel saved with these V6 hybrid turbos?**

**MM:** No, at the moment no. I would have to talk with the engineers. There's a great focus on making the combustion engine as efficient as possible to weekly improve the energy recovery but I can't give you figures.

**Q: And Christian?**

**CH:** I think the engine question is an interesting question. If you roll back the clock for when this engine was thought about, you go back to Max (Mosley's) rule, we're talking about a four cylinder engine and it was quite different. Those regulations were given to engineers, engineers then discussed them and there was a compromise sought because a four cylinder was felt to be wrong for Formula One. The four cylinder at the time was supposed to bring in more manufacturers into Formula One and the compromise was to go to a V6. And then, unfortunately when a bunch of engine engineers are left on their own to come up with a set of regulations, they've come up with something tremendously complicated and tremendously expensive. The engines that we have today are incredible bits of machinery, incredible bits of engineering but the cost to the collective manufacturers has probably been close to a billion euros in developing these engines, and then the burden of costs has been passed on, unfortunately, to the customer teams so unfortunately, I think we have to recognise what's been done from an engineering point of view and now look to simplify things, potentially retaining the V6 philosophy, perhaps going to a twin turbo that would address the sound issues that we've had this year and maybe even a standard energy recovery system would dramatically reduce the costs, dramatically reduce development and therefore the supply price to the customer teams also. So I think that's something that the strategy group need to discuss and look at.

**Q: When you say a standard energy recovery system, do you mean standard across all teams like a standard ECU?**

**CH:** Absolutely, we've had a standard ECU, why not potentially take it a step further and it would negate obviously an enormous amount of

development cost.

**Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) Just a quick first question: anyone here who's not committed until 2020, can you please raise your hand?**

**CH:** You ought to ask who's guaranteed they'll be here, it is a different question, Joe, I think.

**Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) Alright, who has to guarantee they'll be here until 2020 and what do you have to pay if you don't turn up?**

(Visual reaction)

**MODERATOR:** Right, I think you've got your answer there.

**Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) OK, the last one is on a question of philosophy: is it logical that the competitors in the sport make the rules, philosophically speaking?**

**CW:** I knew you were going to do that to me. It is what it is, isn't it? We don't have an alternative and until we do, that's the option available to us. From Christian's comments, you can tell we all care about Formula One, we all care about its future and the group that sits around that strategy group table... our overarching agenda is to ensure that we protect the future of our sport and we're looking at ways to do that. There's an argument perhaps to say well, who better to make the rules than the competitors? Failing an alternative, there isn't an alternative at the moment and if there's one in the future, then that could bring its disadvantages as well.

**OS:** If we all get a chance to make the rules then I'm all for it but it shouldn't be a small group.

**Q: (Ian Parkes – Press Association) Christian, two weeks ago in Russia you suggested the possibility but the highly unlikely possibility of reverting back to the V8 engine. Now you're talking about a V6 engine with lots of different standardised parts. Why would three manufacturers that have spent a billion euros developing this current power unit for the sake of the motor sport industry itself and the car industry per se, want to revert back to something that's similar? Are you not sounding like someone who's desperately clutching at some of straws because your team is no longer winning the championship? Just give us your thoughts please.**

**CH:** Well, first of all, two weeks ago I wasn't in Russia. Look, I think that... you know, I can understand your question but I think the scenario is such that it's unsustainable, it's unsustainable for manufacturers, any of the manufacturers, to keep spending at the level that they are, and therefore, rather than perhaps going backwards with the V8, maybe we should potentially keep the basis of what's been achieved but look at simplifying it because if the development costs stay at where they are, we will not attract new manufacturers into the sport and we may well drive current manufacturers out of the sport. So we have to think, not just about today but about the future. 2015, there's very little that can be done with the regulations but for 2016, an awful lot can be done and I think that the teams, together with the FIA and the promoter, have to have that responsibility to ensure that those issues are addressed and the sport is sustainable and attractive to new manufacturers to come in.

**Q: Toto, you haven't spoken on this. Do you have a rebuttal?**

**TW:** Yes. First of all, I fully agree that we have a big responsibility for all teams and we need to look at the costs but you can't turn the time back. Formula One is the pinnacle and the pinnacle of technology as well and it is important to attract engine manufacturers in the sport, and actually have brought Honda back into the sport. The current format of power units was actually being proposed by Renault back then and for us, as Mercedes, it's a hugely important showcase of technology, road-relevant technology, hybrid technology, the future. It helps us to attract sponsorship and for us, as a car manufacturer - and I guess the same was the case for Renault when they came up with the idea - that is very important. It's less important for Red Bull, for sure, but for us it's crucial.

**Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Toto, for next year, the other two manufacturers cannot do very much if you don't agree on what they want, but are you not afraid that in 2016 they could force you either into complete open development of the current engine or as Christian just said, into a completely different format or let's say a similar engine format which costs less and you can't do very much about it because the others have the majority?**

**TW:** We are all talking about costs and if you would open up the regulations in the way it has been described in that press conference, that clearly means you don't care about costs because that would be like digging a grave for Formula One. We have spent considerable amounts in the development of the power unit, far away from the billion, I would say it's ten percent of that in our case. But anyhow, I think we need to be sensible and we need to come up with solutions which enable the small teams to survive and which still enable the big teams to showcase the technology. Reversing everything, changing the format, changing the engines would just increase costs, it would be the opposite for what we need for Formula One at the current stage. And to come back to your question: yes, in terms of the governance, if we become insensible and if these decisions are being made for 2016, in my opinion that would be disastrous for the sport. We will be very vocal in addressing that issue.

**Q: (Kate Walker – crash.net) Finbarr, the vast majority of crowd-funding sites actually return money to donors if the target is not met. Does Crowdfunder work like that and if so, how are you going to go about returning funds to your six and a half thousand fans?**

**FOC:** Kate, the principle of what we did was to set it up on the basis... the objective was to get here and to race and to showcase the team and that's clear on the website. So the fact that we are here shows that we have reached that objective and the funds we've raised have actually been spent in actually getting here. If we hadn't made the decision to come which we made on November 14, then the funds raised at that stage would have been returned.

**Q: (Leigh O'Gorman – Walker Watson Ltd) Finbarr, how long do you have to make a final decision on a buyer and in addition to that, how far down the line were the design team with the '15 car? And bearing in mind how much it's going to cost to actually buy a new team, can you actually make it worthwhile for any buyer, considering the new season only starts in four months time?**

**FOC:** Sure. I'm talking to a number of people who have got different interests. I'm talking to some people who are interested in making a decision in the next few weeks and if that happens, they can take over the team as it currently stands. The employees have all kept together, they've all been made redundant. Even though they've been made redundant, it meant they are absolutely fantastic people. They've come here to showcase the team and between themselves, 120 of them have all agreed that they will come back and work for any purchaser. So one option is, in the next few weeks, that something like that happens. I'm also talking to people who are interested in the facilities, in the building, in the facilities we have and in looking at a longer strategy, whereby they would use that as the basis for beginning a new team, and that team, clearly would look for a new racing licence in the future. As regards the car, my engineering team tell me that it's not hugely advanced but that if a purchaser comes along now, it will race in the championships next year.

**Q: (Thomas Maher – formulaspy.com) Finbarr, first of all, are you enjoying your time in Formula One and is your current position one that you consider may be long term? And secondly, we've been reading that Mike Gascoyne has said that he has greater faith in your administration in terms of safety. Can you shed any light on why he might have had any doubts about the previous management's running of the cars?**

**FOC:** I cannot. I know there were issues in the press in a previous race which did shine a torch on safety issues in the car. The business I'm in, I'm not somebody who just decides I'm going to have a punt and race this car. Safety is absolutely huge and we wouldn't be here racing these cars unless I was absolutely certain they were completely safe and I think people have seen the cars out there today. Going back to your other question, this is a sport that people love, they are hugely enthused by it and that's fantastic but all I can feel really is a responsibility, responsibility for this team, the absolutely wonderful people who have come here and I would happily hand over my team principal badge straight away to anybody who would take it out of my hands and then I could go and sit in the stands and enjoy the Grand Prix. I will enjoy it if I can achieve my objectives, but it is a professional assignment and a responsibility and the team are probably watching this and that's the sort of person that I think they would want to be him.

**Q: (Chris Medland – crash.net) Finbarr, how difficult is it for you to try and convince a buyer to buy your team when, as the contents of this press conference has shown, there's squabbles over how much it costs for engines, no one can agree on what to do with them? You've got groups where the members can't always get voted in what they want to do and when the sport's in this situation.**

**FOC:** Yes, I think that any potential purchaser would prefer there to be more certainty on the way forward. I don't think the uncertainty is unusual or strange. Every sport, every business goes through times like this. It probably doesn't help any potential purchaser, I would say.

**Q: (Daniel Ortelli – Agence France Presse) I would like an instant survey: we have a team who is considering using 2014 engines next year to save costs. Is anybody on this panel – that's six other teams – against this perspective, that is, to save costs and maybe save Caterham?**

**CH:** We'd have absolutely no problem in Caterham or any other team using 2014 power unit if that assisted cost-saving, but that would mean a change in the regulations.

**OS:** No issues for us. For sure we would support that.

**FG:** No issues for us either.

**TW:** We would need to look at the regulations how we can make that happen and whether it saves costs and if it does, we need to find a way.

**CW:** Yeah, agreed.

**MM:** No problem, that's why no issues for us.

**Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) Claire, you said that there was no choice but to use the strategy group. Surely the FIA is an alternative rule-making body which it has been for many many years. Surely that would be the most logical thing to do?**

**CW:** It would but that's not my decision to make. At the moment, the structure that we have is that we have a strategy group that the FIA is a part of, that was the group that was set up at the start of this year. We agreed to it and that's how the sport is run currently.

## Friday report

Lewis Hamilton drew first blood in the final showdown before Sunday's title decider at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. The Briton was fastest in FPI on Friday afternoon, leading Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg by 0.133s. The afternoon session saw Hamilton repeat the feat by an even slimmer margin of 0.083s.

While the Mercedes drivers were doing battle at the top of the timesheets, with 1.7 seconds in hand over the nearest competition, there was havoc aplenty for Williams. The engine cover flew off Valtteri Bottas' car only a few laps into FPI, and it was established that there were problems with the chassis fixings on both cars. Bottas and Felipe Massa were prevented from taking part in the rest of the session while the team worked to remedy the issues, and completed a scant 15 laps between them.

Friday afternoon also saw the on-track return of Caterham, who fielded Kamui Kobayashi and Will Stevens. Rookie racer Stevens didn't get much bang for his buck in FPI, spending the bulk of the session sitting on the sidelines with only an outlap under his belt before heading out with around 30 minutes remaining to complete a total of 14 laps nearly three seconds slower than the experienced Kobayashi.

Also making their on-track debuts during FPI were Adderly Fong for Sauber and Esteban Ocon for Lotus. It is no coincidence that the three teams running replacement drivers at the final race – with Ocon and Fong running in FPI only – are three of the four teams in the direst financial straights.

Following their recent upswing in performance – one that has come too late for Ron Dennis to keep his pre-season promise that McLaren would win races in 2014 – in FP2 under the Yas Marina spotlights Kevin Magnussen trailed the Mercedes pair by seven-tenths, an improvement not solely down to aero upgrades in recent races, but also as the result of improved power unit management in the latter part of the season.

Jenson Button was not so lucky. Having lost out on much of the morning's running with suspension issues, the Briton's evening was hampered by hydraulics problems that saw him spend more time in the pits than out of it.

Fernando Alonso was unable to set a time in the twilight session, the Ferrari driver's engine appearing to give up the ghost after three installation laps and leaving the Spanish racer stranded on track during his penultimate practice session for the prancing horses.

FPI times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m43.476s [32 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m43.609s [31 laps]
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m45.184s [22 laps]
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m45.334s [30 laps]
5. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m45.361s [23 laps]
6. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m45.718s [17 laps]
7. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m45.835s [32 laps]
8. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m45.913s [8 laps]
9. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m45.983s [23 laps]
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m46.030s [24 laps]
11. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m46.049s [23 laps]
12. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m46.131s [23 laps]
13. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m46.549s [7 laps]
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m46.556s [28 laps]
15. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m46.711s [31 laps]
16. Esteban Ocon (Lotus) 1m47.066s [29 laps]
17. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m47.235s [8 laps]
18. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m47.971s [24 laps]
19. Adderly Fong (Sauber) 1m48.269s [25 laps]
20. Will Stevens (Caterham) 1m50.684s [14 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m42.113s [35 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m42.196s [37 laps]
3. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m42.895s [37 laps]
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m42.959s [33 laps]
5. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m43.070s [34 laps]
6. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m43.183s [32 laps]

7. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m43.489s [33 laps]
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m43.503s [23 laps]
9. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m43.546s [38 laps]
10. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m43.558s [34 laps]
11. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m43.746s [37 laps]
12. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m44.005s [38 laps]
13. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m44.068s [32 laps]
14. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m44.157s [39 laps]
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m44.316s [38 laps]
16. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m44.763s [37 laps]
17. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m44.986s [35 laps]
18. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m45.505s [38 laps]
19. Will Stevens (Caterham) 1m47.057s [34 laps]
20. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) NO TIME SET [2 laps]

## Thursday press conference

For the last driver press conference of the 2014 season all the talk was on the future - Sunday's race, and prospects for 2015.

Present were Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), Jenson Button (McLaren), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Nico Hulkenberg (Force India), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

**Q: Lewis, you're guaranteed the title on Sunday if you finish in the top two, something that you have done for the last six races. It's your fourth final day title showdown, how are you feeling before this duel in the desert?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** Yeah, I think it generally feels quite cool to be here, obviously the weather is great, the track's fantastic, it's a beautiful place, so, yeah, excited for the weekend.

**Q: Nico, it's your first final day title showdown, how much confidence are you carrying into this weekend from the way you performed last time out in Brazil?**

**Nico ROSBERG:** Yeah, of course it's great coming into this weekend, the way Brazil went for sure, that I was able to progress after Austin, that gives me a lot of confidence going into this weekend, definitely.

**Q: Lewis, back to you, you've had two poles and a win here. You also retired twice while leading. Does the fact that the showdown is happening at a track where you have a strong record make any difference?**

**LH:** I'm sure there are positives with it. It's a great circuit, it's generally suited the car that I had when I was back in McLaren years ago and it's definitely a track that has suited my driving style in the past, but every year is different. I hope to take that positivity into this weekend.

**Q: Back to you Nico. You qualified ahead of Lewis here last year and you have done so overall in this 2014 season, how much satisfaction do you derive from that?**

**NR:** At the moment I'm not really thinking about that. At the moment I'm focused on trying to win this race. But of course, yes, knowing that helps and gives me a good opportunity this weekend knowing that my qualifying form has been really good, so that should be another plus going into this race here.

**Q: Fernando, coming to you, it's been announced today that you're leaving Ferrari after five seasons. Tell us why and your thoughts on those five years with the team?**

**Fernando ALONSO:** Yeah, obviously, you know, it's a new chapter in my career. I felt it was the time to find new projects, new motivation. It was not an easy decision to make. I was in talks, even last year to be honest, and we wait for this year, for the new car, the new turbo era etc. This year I felt around summertime, September, it was time to move and I take the decision. Only time will tell if it's a good one or a bad one. But what is for sure is that it has been an amazing experience. So, so happy, so proud to have had those five years with an amazing team, amazing brand like Ferrari. I grew up as a driver, as a person, only good feelings and good words. Obviously we missed the championship, came three times second, but I am extremely proud of those second places and the work we did in those years. Now it is time to close one door, to open a new one and we'll see how it goes.

**Q: In terms of opening that new door, McLaren says it will announce its drivers on December 1st. How much bearing does the test next week with Honda and McLaren have on what you do next?**

**FA:** Zero.

**Q: OK. Moving on to Sebastian then. In many ways the destinies of you, Fernando and Jenson have all been interlinked over the last few weeks and months. You've signed to replace him [Alonso] on the three-year deal. How are you feeling about that and why is this the right move for you now?**

**Sebastian VETTEL:** I think it felt like the right time. I think it's not an easy decision to make. Obviously I've been with Red Bull for more or less my entire life, since I was 12 years old I've been supported by them and obviously I have a very, very strong link to all the people in Austria. Later on obviously I had the opportunity to race for both of their Formula One teams, which we couldn't see coming once we were starting and part of the Red Bull Junior Team but in terms of timing obviously it worked out brilliantly and the success we've had in Formula One, especially with Red Bull Racing over the last four years I think has been an incredible journey. But I think at some stage you feel that you want to take on a new challenge and do something different. I think I don't have to mention the history of Ferrari in the sport and it's probably the greatest team to driver for. I'm very excited and very motivated to try to do my best, to put my heart in it and yeah, obviously be successful, that's target.

**Q: You're a three-time winner of this race here in Abu Dhabi and the outgoing world champion - next year you'll hand your number one plate to either Lewis or Nico. What's your commentary on the title battle that those two have fought throughout this year?**

**SV:** Well, I think Mercedes made it very boring this year, so I think it's good to see that they were battling very closely, they had great races, battling for the lead, which is obviously the most interesting position in the race for the people to watch. Remembering races like Bahrain, I think they put on a great show for the fans and took it to the last race, so I think both of them deserve to win after such a great season but I'm sure if you ask either one of them, they will give you plenty of reasons why each one is deserving more than the other.

**Q: Thank you. Coming to you Jenson. Your destiny has been linked to the two gentlemen to your right and their moves. What's your feeling now on the way things are panning out?**

**Jenson BUTTON:** Nothing has changed for me, for the last two months. So I've got nothing else to add, apart from that I go into this weekend looking forward to it. I've learned to live in the moment a lot more this year and that's exactly what I'm going to do. I've got my family here this weekend, so looking forward to the weekend and hopefully we can have a good result.

**Q: It's worth noting that you've had the third longest career in Formula One history, how do you look back on it at this point?**

**JB:** At this point? It's everything I set out to achieve. I think when you're a kid your dream is to get to Formula One, your next dream is to win a race

and then win the world championship. I've achieved all three of those. Is that enough for a driver? Every driver is different. But I love racing and that's why, as I said, living in the moment is key right now, not thinking about the future too much and hopefully we can have some good fights this weekend.

**Q: OK, thank you for that. Coming to you Nico. You scored points in the first 10 grands prix this year but only four times in the last eight races. What's been going on there?**

**Nico HULKENBERG:** The second half wasn't as flawless and as smooth as the first half I'm afraid and on top of that also we seemed to be a lot more competitive initially in the year. We've slipped back a bit in terms of development and, you know, Formula One is a fast-moving business and if you don't put the upgrades on the car you get overtaken and I think that's what happened to us.

**Q: There's a lot of focus on the midfield teams at the moment. From a driver's point of view, what's your take on the situation with Force India, Sauber and Lotus?**

**NH:** In terms of what?

**Q: Sustainability, the future, the outlook?**

**NH:** Well, obviously we're here, we're fighting for points and obviously the target is to beat McLaren in the Constructors' Championship, which is very ambitious, they are quite far ahead now. We'll give our best, as every weekend, and give our all and see if we can do it. Otherwise, everything is OK.

**Q: (Frederic Ferret - l'Equipe) A question to Fernando and Sebastian. You are used to having last grand prix pressure to deal with the title. Can you explain how do you feel at that point and how you dealt with it during the race?**

**FA:** I think every situation is different. I've been a couple of times, five times in that situation. All five were different. It depends on whether you are in front, behind, with who you are battling, with which mood you arrive to the race. It depends on the circuit: it depends on anything. I remember Brazil, for example 2012, it was raining on Sunday morning, there are different factors around the race itself that it can change your approach or can change your feelings. I think it's a very unique thing on those moments and it will be an interesting weekend for Nico, Lewis, wishing them the best of luck because they deserve it after a super championship and, you know, only one can win but let's see a good race on Sunday.

**SV:** Well, it's what you're working for all year, to arrive at the last race and still have the opportunity to become world champion. I think that's ultimately what drives all of us. So, yeah, I think the most important thing is to enjoy.

**Q: (Ralf Bach - Sport Bild) The first question is: did you make any practice to handle the pressure you have. Everybody expects you will win the title, so you're the guy who has to lose anything. Second, is it your turn to take it easy and just be second on Sunday or will you demonstrate to the whole world that you will win the title with a victory here?**

**LH:** To the second question, I come into the race weekend to try to win, as I do every race weekend, so nothing changes there. And in terms of the pressure, I don't particularly feel any. I think I've had plenty of experience through my racing career - 15 odd years I would say, actually it might be 20 years of racing - to be prepared for today. There's no special recipe for it.

**Q: (Flavio Vanetti - Corriere dello Sport) To Fernando: having the possibility to change something in your relationship, in your history with Ferrari, what would you do?**

**FA:** I don't know really. I enjoyed the experience, as I said before, and I feel very privileged of what we achieved and lived in those years. The group of people I worked with, it was amazing. I learned so many things in those five years. I'm not the same driver as in 2009, when I arrived. I think I'm more prepared now. I'm better in all the aspects of the driving skills. I think it was a very, very important step in my career. You need to feel the moment when it's time to move. As I said, I felt it was time for me to find new things. I expressed my wish to the team in September. They understand: they were very helpful on that because obviously I had two more years contract. But they understand my position, they listen and I think it's the best for both parts and now hopefully we can battle for better positions and wins in the future.

**Q: (Jerome Pugmire - AP) Question for Nico Rosberg. Nico, Lewis says he's not feeling under any particular pressure coming into the race. What is your mindset? Are you feeling under any pressure?**

**NR:** Well, it's an intense weekend, for sure, yes. I wouldn't use the word pressure but it's going to be intense. It's going to be a great battle. I look forward to it, that's what I've been working towards for a while now, for this sort of chance, this last race here. And, yeah, Lewis is a great competitor and opponent and it would be hopefully a great end to the season. And, of course, I'm here to try and win the race and then I need a bit of help from Lewis that he doesn't finish second. That's it. So I'm hoping Lewis can come up with something.

**Q: (Thomas Maher - FormulaSpy.com) Question for Sebastian. Sebastian, assuming the decision to leave Red Bull was a difficult one to make, could the team have made any guarantees or promises to you that would have changed your mind and convinced you to stay for 2015?**

**SV:** Look, I have a very, very good relationship, not just with the team but with the whole Red Bull family. Despite the contractual situation here and there, positions in the championship etc, I think the relationship is far too good and once... I don't know, we have a saying in German that I cannot really translate into English but... obviously my wish was to leave and I think it's not a good thing, good advice, to stop people when they want to leave and force them to stay, or make them stay or try to convince them - because ultimately they wanted to leave. So, yeah, as I said, obviously it has been a very difficult decision for me to make because it was not a decision against a team, against Red Bull but a decision for my new future. So, for sure, those things, big decisions are not easy but ultimately you need to listen to yourself, listen to your heart and go with that.

**Q: (David Croft - Sky Sports F1) Fernando, what was the catalyst for your decision to leave Ferrari? What was that moment that you realized? What was the reason behind it that led up to quite a momentous decision?**

**FA:** It was not a special moment of the year that I opened the eyes. As I said, last year I had some doubts about 2014. I knew that it was a big change of regulations, so I thought it was the best thing to check how the 2014 new turbo era was going for Ferrari and then, yeah, I had a very close relationship with president Montezemolo, we talk every week and we, more or less, agree that, if this year we were not competitive again, maybe I could think on other options. And yes, when I arrived summer break, I said maybe it's time to sit with the president and see if for them it's OK, I would like to go. I need to thank so much Ferrari because they could say no but they understand it was the best for the two parts. This is, again, a true sign of respect and love for this team - and they show me also respect on that. As I said, I stop as a Ferrari driver but from Monday I am a Ferrari supporter.

**Q: (Andrew Benson - BBC Sport) Jenson, are you prepared to wait for McLaren to make their decision? Do you want to stay in Formula One before anything else or will there come a point where you want to take the decision out of their hands?**

**JB:** It's been an interesting few months. When you're in Formula One for so many years - 15 years - you have blinkers on in terms of anything else apart from Formula One. This is the best sport in the world, this is your life, this is everything. But when you are put in an uncomfortable situation obviously your eyes are opened to other possibilities. And there are a lot of challenges out there, whether it's in motorsport or other sport or something else altogether. I'm open to many things in life and, for me, I love what I do for a living. I love racing in Formula One and the time I've spent with McLaren has been great. The last two years have been a bit tricky in terms of results but in terms of the personnel, they're mega. We had a barbecue last night and there's such a good atmosphere in this team. It is like a big family. So, I've loved working with them. Will I wait for the decision? That's something I can't comment on right now.

**Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos - Racing Magazine) A question to Nico Rosberg. If you win, you need somebody to be second ahead of Lewis to be World Champion. In six races no car could get close to the Mercedes. Are you confident that in Abu Dhabi it might be different? There might be a team that can challenge Mercedes - or you know you need an abnormal race in order to have this result?**

**NR:** Of course a lot of things can happen but it can happen as easy as a Williams, for example, having a great start and slotting in between us two. This track is one of the most difficult to overtake. We were looking at that this morning. The speed difference you need to overtake the guy in front is really very big at this track and so that will be one opportunity for example. But there's many scenarios, so, as I say, I'm optimistic.

**Q: (Daniel Johnson – Daily Telegraph) Nico, you mentioned that, really, unless a Williams gets involved perhaps, you need Lewis to make a mistake. Is there anything you can do to try and help that happen?**

**NR:** Yeah, of course. I need to do what I can to try and put the pressure on. In Brazil Lewis made a mistake so there is a chance. I need to do what I can to keep going like that.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – GloboSport.com) Fernando, when you talk to the Ferrari bosses in September, that it would be better for the team for you to leave the company, did you have already another option in your hand? And, if you had, did you believe that you should trust in it because you are leaving the team, Ferrari, probably because the perspective of results won't be in a short time. And this new option you had in your hand. Did you believe in it?**

**FA:** Well, the thing is a little longer than I explained. We tried to see what was the best possibility. In fact it was... renewing the contract possibility also in the first couple of months of the year, to extend the contract until 2019, so it was a little bit of things going on during the year. Then, when you are inside, when you see things, when you see how the teams are moving, which direction are moving things for the future, maybe you agree, maybe you don't agree. Probably I didn't agree so much and in September I said maybe it was the best thing to say bye-bye if it was possible. If I had something in September? No. I had that decision, I have to be happy, I have to be motivated, I need to love what I'm doing and in September I felt it was not the case. And in September I felt that it was not the case – and then after that, I started to look at some possibilities. I trust what I will have. Yes.

**Q: (Haoran Zhou – FI Express) Jenson, would a good race result for you change anything in terms of the future, because you've had a good string of results recently?**

**JB:** Personally, I would hope not. I would hope that a result this weekend would not change my fate for the future. I feel that I bring a lot more to a team than just one race but hope that my career would speak a lot louder than one individual race.

**Q: (Haoran Zhou – FI Express) Fernando, you spent the whole of the 2010 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix behind Vitaly Petrov. If one of the championship contenders needs to overtake, do you have any suggestions for them?**

**FA:** Not really. I didn't succeed, so try not to repeat what we did in that race, that will be the best solution for them. These days, there are many tools that we can play with, with electric motor, DRS, things that probably could help in a situation like that. But the best thing is not to stop behind anyone.

**Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Sebastian, how do you see the co-operation with Kimi? Will it be easier for you than with anybody else?**

**SV:** Yes. I think he would probably reply the same if you asked him. That's what he told me, just before! I think, yes. Why? Because Kimi is probably the least complicated driver on the grid so in terms of performance on the track, when we talk about the skills Kimi has, I don't think there is a single person in the paddock who doubts his skills, including myself, but from a personal point of view, on a personal level, very straightforward. I don't expect any complications because I think we have a good relationship but more so, I think we have great respect for each other which I think is always very healthy to deal with in these sorts of situations coming up.

**Q: (Walter Koster – Saabrucker Zeitung) Quite another question: gentlemen, a short view back to the past. Thirty years ago, Niki Lauda told us 'take a monkey, place him into the cockpit and he is able to drive the car.' Thirty years later, Sebastian told us 'I had to start my car like a computer, it's very complicated.' And Nico Rosberg said that during the race – I don't remember what race – he pressed the wrong button on the wheel. Question for you both: is Formula One driving today too complicated with twenty and more buttons on the wheel, are you too much under effort, under pressure? What are your wishes for the future concerning the technical programme during the race? Less buttons, more? Or less and more communication with your engineers?**

**SV:** Can you repeat the question?! Yeah, I remember the question. I think it depends all on how the monkey grows up these days. I think it's a different generation of monkeys that Niki was talking about probably compared to monkeys we have today. Obviously there's a lot of buttons on the steering wheel, probably too many but I think for us, we grow up like that, it's a different generation. I think if you put a modern phone in Niki's hands, I'm not sure he would know what to do – sorry Niki. I think it's what you get used to. For sure, when I started, for example, in Formula One, there were a lot of procedures I had to learn, a lot of buttons I needed to know how to control etc. But it's part of cars nowadays. If you jump into a normal road car, there's also plenty of buttons but in the end the most important bit is the steering wheel, turning the car left and right and the accelerator at the bottom. I think the basics haven't changed and that's the important thing, that the sport remains as it has been many many years ago despite how many buttons you have on the steering wheel.

**NR:** I'll make this a bit shorter. I think we need to just make sure that the sport stays simple for the fans, that's the most important thing. The direction, it's all great, technology fantastic, hybrid power, buttons, everything, that's all great but we need to make sure that for the fans it stays simple enough. That's something for the medium term future, that we need to keep an eye on. That's it.

**Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Lewis, there's been points this year, I think it's fair to say, when you haven't felt that the fight between you and Nico has been a totally clean fight. Are you totally confident that it will be this weekend?**

**LH:** Yeah. I don't really know what else to say. That how it's been. You have to go into the race weekends believing that's going to be the case, yeah.

**Q: (Daniel Johnson – The Telegraph) Is there anything that you can do to make sure it will be?**

**LH:** Don't think so.

**Q: (Jon McEvoy – Daily Mail) Lewis, will you speak together before the race to ensure that there's no argy-bargy out there?**

**LH:** No.

**Q: (Jon McEvoy – Daily Mail) You don't need to or you have an understanding already....**

**LH:** We don't need to. It's already been discussed at the beginning of the season and several times through the season and particularly after Spa, so there's no reason to revisit it. We're not children, we should know what is wrong and what is right.

**Q: Nico, do you have anything to add?**

**NR:** No, just that yes, Lewis can do something to keep it clean which is drive cleanly himself. So it's not like he can't do anything.

**Q: (Abhishek Takle – Midday) Question to both Lewis and Nico: it was 14 years ago that you fought for the championship in go-karting. How does the dynamic change when you're fighting for a Formula One World Championship? How has it changed for the two of you, because obviously the stakes are a lot higher?**

**NR:** Yeah, it's quite amazing to think now that 15 years later we're actually in that position which we used to dream about, to be in the best F1 team, fighting for the championship, fighting for race wins. It's really amazing. Of course now it's more intense, there's more surrounding it, that's the best way to put it.

**LH:** I generally feel it's quite similar to back in the karting days. At that age, it was as intense as I had experienced, I wanted to win back then and nothing's changed.

**Q: (Haoran Zhou – FI Express) Lewis, do have any family with you this weekend, because generally you perform better, you smile a lot more when**

**you have family around? That's just a personal observation but I just want to know does the whole family come to Abu Dhabi for this important weekend?**

**LH:** I have a couple of friends and I think one or two cousins in the grandstands and I've got a close friend that's with me in the paddock but otherwise no other family here.

**Q: (Christobal Rosaleny - Car and Driver) Fernando, I've seen that you are wearing a new helmet at this Grand Prix; could you tell us its meaning?**

**FA:** Yeah, I wear a helmet with a picture of a pit stop this year on one side, the Italian flag in the middle and the signatures of everybody in the team on the other side. I just told them this morning that it's the last time that I will jump in a Ferrari, so I want to bring all of them with me because they were a part of this fantastic experience and I want to do my last race with them on the track. To be honest, it's been a little bit of tricks because at Sochi, I took all the signatures from everybody but when I arrived here, we were missing 20 or 25 so now the helmet is not as perfect as it should be, because now we have all the 25 signatures everywhere but I'm happy and proud of them and happy to wear them on my helmet.

**Q: (Jerome Pugmire - Associated Press) Sebastian, how emotional do you think your first race for Ferrari will be, considering how much of an idol Michael was for you?**

**SV:** Yeah, I think it will be special for sure. Obviously, it's a childhood dream. When I was growing up myself but also for a lot of kids at the go-kart track in Germany, Michael was our hero. And at that time he was obviously still with Benetton but when we grew up, obviously he was still part of us. He moved to Ferrari, took on a massive challenge back then in '96 and got very close the years before but made it happen in 2000. Since then, I think every link that you have or when you think back it's always Michael in the red cars so I think it will be a very special journey and I'm very much looking forward to it. Not only the first race, to be honest with you, but even the first time in winter testing that I will step into the car, I think will be very special and will be something that remains with you probably for the rest of your life so I'm very much looking forward to it, I don't know yet how it feels but I'm very keen to find out.

**Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) Fernando, if you have the possibility to chose your teammate for next year, would you chose Jenson?**

**FA:** Hmm.

**JB:** Take your time!

**FA:** I don't know where I will be so... We will see.

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