



Sunday press conference

After a strong Saturday result for Red Bull, on Sunday it was Ferrari's turn to reduce the gap to the all-conquering Mercedes with a podium finish and a spot at the post-race press conference.

Present were Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), and Fernando Alonso (Ferrari).

Q: Three consecutive for Lewis Hamilton - how about that? Great stuff, Lewis. That looked, from where we were sitting, incredibly easy. How was it for you?

Lewis HAMILTON: Ni hao. The fans have been incredible this week, so I really felt a lot of energy but I really couldn't do this without all the hard work from the team, it's incredible. Honestly, I just can't believe how amazing the car is, and how hard everyone has worked. The results we're getting is a real true showing of all the hard work.

Q: Absolutely incredible. You were radioing in and saying 'my tyres feel good' and everybody else was screaming to come into the pits. The first stint was just beautiful for you.

LH: Yeah. Surprisingly, again, as I said, after P2 I had to make a lot of changes in anticipation of today, even though yesterday was wet, but it worked perfectly and I was able to look after the tyres. After that I was just really racing myself. I did lose a lot of time after the first stop but still it was great. I am really happy that Nico is up here with us, it's great points for the team and they really deserve it.

Q: You had one little trip off the circuit, obviously when the front tyres were finally going away. A little fright there for you?

LH: No, no, fortunately there's lots of run-off area. Basically the left front is the one that's graining and wearing and I'd gone quite a lot longer than I'd planned and eventually the tyre was dead so I locked it, but it was OK and I recovered.

Q: Nico, you still lead the Formula One World Championship so some consolation in that respect?

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, definitely. That's there. I'm not going to use the word still because I plan to keep it that way. Definitely in the lead and that's good. Especially considering that the whole weekend was really, really bad for me. It went completely wrong in so many different respects. Also, in the race we had no telemetry so there was no communication between the car and the pits, so they had no idea what was going on on track and that's why the start was also so bad and a lot of things came together. So I'm pleased with second and I just look forward to a normal weekend again in Barcelona, full attack again.

Q: Yeah it was a bad start. Take us through that first corner when you had contact with Valtteri Bottas in the Williams.

NR: It was just very close, there were cars all over the place. Just had a bit of contact there and it was great that my car held on.

Q: Then you had to make your way back through the field. You had a little bit of fun coming through?

NR: It's really a pleasure to drive this car at the moment. It's incredible the car that the team has built - fantastic. So thanks to the whole team. And Mercedes. This thing is so quick. It really increases the enjoyment level even further.

Q: Let's talk to Fernando Alonso, third for Ferrari. I know there are a lot of Ferrari fans out there and of course Fernando Alonso fans. Fernando, you beat the Red Bulls and you're third only behind the Mercedes Benz cars. You must be really satisfied with that.

Fernando ALONSO: Hello everybody, first of all. It was a good weekend. We did improve the car a little bit compared to the first three races, so we felt more competitive and now in the race being here on the podium is some kind of surprise for us, a nice surprise finally. Happy with a podium finish today. I think I'm third in the Drivers' Championship behind these two guys. So we didn't have the start of the season that we would like but at the end of the day we're still in the fight.

Q: Just briefly you had a big contact with Felipe Massa going into the first corner. You were lucky [there] with no suspension damage.

FA: Yeah, it was a big contact. I asked on the radio 'can you check the car', because it felt OK but I don't know how it looks from the outside, but it was OK and we managed very lucky to finish the race and hopefully next one it will be a clean start.

Q: Lewis, we're back to tracks you know well, obviously Barcelona, you've got some testing coming up. Surely you can't keep improving this car?

LH: Well, this team is on a roll that's for sure. The team have done a great job, as I said. We're going to keep pushing; we're going to keep moving forwards. That's what Mercedes Benz want to do. They want to keep moving forward, developing, hopefully improving the engine, also the car. But as I said, I'm going to be working hard, we're going to keep working hard because obviously the others are pushing to catch us up. So I hope it continues.

Q: Lewis, congratulations, a three-time winner here. How does that feel?

LH: It feels incredible. I just have to shout out a big thank you, thank you so much to the team, firstly for embracing me into the team last year and for all the hard work and for them continuously pushing forward. I really hope that the guys back at the factory are enjoying this and really have a great week. I'm so, so happy. I had such a great race, really enjoyed it, particularly the last few laps, y'know? Really trying to keep temperature in the tyres, pushing a little bit more, just to keep temperature up and the car was great.

Q: You spoke about the work being done in FP2 and then of course the car was good enough for pole in the wet and then good enough to win in the dry. How perfect was it?

LH: The car was really good. As I said, made lots of changes overnight on Friday night and obviously it was wet for qualifying. So I didn't get to feel... I didn't know what it was going to be like today. And really just that hard work sitting down with the engineers, really choosing... we didn't guess, we really made those steps in anticipation for today and it worked perfectly. I couldn't really have asked for more.

Q: The only really big surprise I guess was getting the chequered flag a lap early - which could have tripped you up.

LH: That was very strange! I was thinking 'am I seeing things?' I looked up, I was coming across the line expecting to do another lap and all of a sudden

I looked for a split second and I saw the flag, I lifted for a second and I saw there was no-one on the wall, so then I just kept going. I did lose a second or so. I asked the team, they said no, so I just kept going. Very, very strange. It was good to do another lap.

Q: Nico, you said so many things went wrong. What was your set-up like from Friday FP2 though to the race itself?

NR: It was all OK. Set-up-wise it was a good team effort this weekend. Because it's a very unique track here with the understeer being the main problem and the front-left tyre, so you really have to change everything, adapt to the needs of the track and we did well as a team. It wasn't perfect in the race but it was definitely... pretty good.

Q: As you played catch-up from the start you could really see what your strengths were in comparison to other cars.

NR: Yeah, definitely. We have the best car, y'know, and that makes it more enjoyable then to do catch-up, even though of course don't want to do any catch-up – but I was back there so then catching up was nice with this fast car. It's a good weapon.

Q: Then we heard you not entirely happy giving a fuel report every lap.

NR: No! My telemetry failed, yeah? So I was completely on my own out there. The team then never... doesn't see any information from the car, so they have nothing to do. Er... well not... they do have things to do! So I had to do all the things on my own out there and, for example, it was then telling the team what my fuel level is so that they could judge if I was using too much fuel or if I'm safe – and I had to do that in Turn One y'know and Turn One is a difficult corner anyways, so yeah, didn't enjoy that point.

Q: Fernando, first of all, first podium this year for Ferrari, how satisfying is that?

FA: It is. Obviously we had a difficult start of the season with some lack of performance in the first races and, y'know it's good to be on the podium here on the fourth race after a not-easy weekend with changeable weather conditions and a difficult race as well, as Nico touched on. I think with the tyres, being a unique track with the front graining that you need to take care, plus some actions because we were not alone on the race. We managed, I think, quite well to get this podium and this is hopefully some boost of the team and some extra motivation y'know, to keep improving and to do even better in the next couple of races.

Q: And again, the set-up from FP2 to the race, how good was that?

FA: I think we make very few changes to be honest, from F1 to now in the race. We brought some new parts here, a small step that probably we are a little bit more competitive now and we concentrate on Friday testing those parts and not much set-up work to be honest. Yesterday on the wet conditions, now in these days it's not much to do, wet to dry anyway, so, as I said, the setup, my feeling was quite OK from Friday to now.

Q: The podium here, what can you promise your home fans at the next grand prix at home?

FA: We need to see. We need to remain very calm. It has been a very unique race, we make a step forward. We were ninth and tenth fifteen days ago and that was hard, pain a little bit. So, yeah, we need to remain calm. We are happy, we need to enjoy the result today but still a long way to go and we cannot promise anything for Barcelona. We will give 100 per cent again and we will fight – but in terms of result we need to remain very calm and see how development is these three weeks if we can bring some extra new parts for Barcelona.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Nico, when you said that you had to report your fuel consumption or fuel level to the pit lane every lap, why is that? Wouldn't it be easier that you saw on the dashboard a plus or minus and then you could drive on your own rather than talking to your pits?

NR: Yeah, you're right. Just that I didn't have that function, probably because we don't really need that normally. It's fine like that, it's just reporting once in a while to the paddock. It wasn't every lap, you know, it was just once in a while so they can put a few dots and see where it's going. That's it. So that wasn't a problem at all, it was just that I didn't like where I had to do it because it was in turn one and that was not good.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) Fernando, you said several times that Ferrari needs a global improvement but is there a priority in this situation, to try to get closer to Mercedes?

FA: Well, of course it is a priority, we need to close, we need to catch them as soon as possible before the championship is over, so we need to keep scoring points, as many as we can now that we are not super-competitive, try not to lose too much ground on points in the championship, and if in one race we become as competitive as them, try to catch up in terms of points. At the moment, it seems very far away because they have a big advantage and we need to work really hard if we want to have that possibility. There is nothing really special we can do, just don't give up; we're in the fourth race in the championship, there 's still a long way go but being super-realistic, knowing that the gap is very very big it's going to be very tough.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo On Line) Fernando, how can you understand this race? In the last one, you finished a long way behind the Mercedes: this time you were seven seconds behind Nico. Is it the characteristics of the track or the new parts that you brought that has made the car so fast?

FA: I think it was a combination. As I said, we brought new parts that feel a little more competitive – the car feels a little bit faster – we also tested in Bahrain, they felt OK and we confirmed that here. On the other hand, I personally have had an extremely good weekend, probably at the level of 2012 in terms of driving and feeling comfortable with the car, qualifying, Friday, today. In Bahrain, we were one minute behind the leaders, ninth and tenth and today we are on the podium, seven seconds behind Nico as I said, but Kimi's one minute behind the leaders. I think it's a combination. Hopefully I can keep going like this. I felt more comfortable with the car and we will not give up.

Q: (Alexander Aucott – China Radio International) Lewis, you mentioned the support of the Chinese fans on the podium. Have you seen an increase in support over the years here and is it something that makes them unique here at Shanghai?

LH: Every year I come here, I feel that the fan base – at least my fan base – feels like it's growing every year here. Growing up in Stevenage, I never ever thought that I would fly halfway round the world and have so many people who chose to wear my cap, to wear my top, to have my flag and really support me. It's absolutely phenomenal, and here it's maybe my second year, I think, that from the moment I'm at the airport – I don't know how they know I'm there but they know I'm there – it's almost like they radio to the guys at the hotel and when I get to the hotel – I don't know how they know I'm at that hotel – but they're there every morning, every evening, day and night and that's why I always say we win and we lose together. This morning and on the way, one of my fans she gave me like a digital photo frame and on it, they did a special video for me from all the fan base here and for me, it's touched my heart so much so I want to say a big thank you to all of them.

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos – Racing Magazine) Nico, all the other teams have set their sights on the Barcelona race as their best chance to improve their performance with the novelties on their cars, so how confident is Mercedes that the things you're going to bring to Barcelona will keep the gap or maybe even extend the gap you have to the other teams?

NR: Hopefully, more than all the other teams; we want to go to Barcelona with the biggest step, that's our ambition. Barcelona is a chance for us to extend the advantage that we have and that's the approach that we have going to Barcelona, 100 percent.

Race report

Lewis Hamilton broke a personal record in Shanghai on Sunday afternoon, winning three consecutive grands prix for the first time in his Formula One career. The Briton delivered a dominant performance from lights to flag, crossing the line with 18 seconds in hand over his teammate.

In a bizarre incident the race was cut short when the chequered flag was waved prematurely by accident. Whatever the reason, the rulebook states that a grand prix must end when the leader is shown the chequered flag, and the altered result cut Hamilton's advantage over Nico Rosberg and robbed Marussia of a hard-fought place won on the final lap.

While the timesheets show an easy 1-2 finish for Mercedes, with Rosberg seven seconds ahead of Fernando Alonso in third, the full story was rather different. After making a poor getaway from P4, where he had lined up behind the Red Bulls, the Mercedes driver had to fight his way back up from seventh place, all the while hampered by a total loss of telemetry from his car.

Despite the challenge, however, Rosberg showed his maturity as a driver, combining providing lap after lap of feedback to the pit wall with a series of impressive overtakes, passing Nico Hulkenberg and Felipe Massa on track before getting the jump on Daniel Ricciardo during the first round of stops before slipping neatly past Sebastian Vettel for third.

Although he may have been running with the leading pack, it was soon clear that Vettel was struggling for pace, and with teammate Ricciardo chomping at the bit for a chance to chase down the Mercedes pair and Fernando Alonso, who was running in the middle of the two, Vettel was asked to let the Australian past. Initially reluctant, Vettel is beginning to show the strains of being regularly matched and occasionally beaten by a teammate for the first time in several years.

It was a decent result for Ferrari in front of new team principal Marco Mattiachi, and one that even surprised the team. Despite an early brush with Massa's Williams Alonso was able to stay ahead of Ricciardo in the closing stages, keeping the Red Bull behind for just long enough to secure the Scuderia's first podium finish of the season in a race that only served to emphasise the difference between Mercedes and the other ten teams on the grid.

Having got comfortable running in second place after Vettel pitted, Alonso was defenceless against a swooping Rosberg – powered by a unit that is the undoubted class of the field – on the back straight. From then on the two Silver Arrows raced off into the distance, each racing alone and troubled only by lapped cars.

Lotus' run of terrible form continued on Sunday, with Romain Grosjean retiring as a result of gearbox failure, while Pastor Maldonado managed a P14 finish after working his way through the field from the back of the pack.

Another team to suffer another dire weekend in Shanghai was McLaren. After a decent start to the season with a 2-3 finish in Australia and both drivers in the points in Malaysia, the Woking racers have been on a downward slope, with two race weekends without a single point now under their belts.

Force India had a respectable result in Shanghai, with Sergio Perez following up his Bahrain podium with a P9 in China despite lining up in 16th, while teammate Nico Hulkenberg finished in sixth place after battling to the finish with Valtteri Bottas.

Chinese Grand Prix race result

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1h33m28.338s
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 18.686s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 25.765s
4. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) + 26.978s
5. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) + 51.012s
6. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) + 58.145s
7. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 58.148s
8. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) + 1m23.990s
9. Sergio Perez (Force India) + 1m26.489s
10. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) + 1m03.585s
11. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1 lap
12. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) + 1 lap
13. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) + 1 lap
14. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) + 1 lap
15. Felipe Massa (Williams) + 1 lap
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1 lap
17. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) + 1 lap
18. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) + 1 lap
19. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 2 laps
20. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) + 2 laps

Romain Grosjean (Lotus) RET

Adrian Sutil (Sauber) RET

Saturday press conference

With two Renault-powered drivers in the top three, Saturday's rain in China led to an unexpected line-up at the pot-qualifying press conference.

Present were Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Lewis, congratulations, your third pole this year. That must have been so difficult with so many difficult and different conditions out there. What sort of satisfaction do you get from that?

Lewis HAMILTON: Definitely the most when it's raining. It's so slippery out there, trying to find the grip, obviously not making mistakes on your lap, and really putting it together, especially when you have these guys pushing you. So, it was a tough session. I really enjoyed it. The car was feeling great. We always have stuff we can improve but the team have done a great job this weekend. A good position for the race and I hope we can follow through tomorrow.

Q: Daniel, you're second on the grid, your equal best ever grid position. What sort of satisfaction for you to put together such a good lap in these conditions – right at the end there?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Yeah I think that was very pleasing to do it at the end. To be honest, I struggled a bit throughout the session, at least personally I didn't feel like I was getting on top of the conditions but then the last set of inters right at the end of Q3 we managed to get a bit more out of it and I put a good lap together, so pretty pleased to be on the front row. Yeah, a good day.

Q: Sebastian, is this Red Bull Racing coming back and getting on terms with Mercedes back at the front?

Sebastian VETTEL: Well, in wet conditions I think we have a bit more of a chance. In dry conditions they are still quite quick and a little bit too far away. But let's see what happens tomorrow, I think the weather forecast is dry so for sure we'll try. I think we are in the best positions to try to give them a very hard time tomorrow.

Q: Yes, what is the weather forecast for tomorrow, Lewis? What are you expecting? What are you looking forward to in the race tomorrow

LH: I was told it is going to be a good day tomorrow – I don't know if it's going to be the same for you guys? So, we don't know. Here it's always hazy, you don't really know what's going to happen with the weather but it will be cold for sure. Today you didn't see the track drying up at all. But I hope it's a dry race. Obviously these guys are a little bit closer in the wet, but we'll have a good race either way.

Q: Lewis, going into that session I think you just did one lap this morning – so how well prepared were you for that session?

LH: Yeah, I mean, we all had to save our tyres. It's interesting because I'll have to go and analyse it 'cos I know at least one of these guys was driving a few laps in FP3 but I didn't feel the need to go out really. I think it's kind of... I don't think it's great for the fans that we don't have a huge amount of tyres to... just to go out and run so they can see us driving. I'm sure people are tuning in and turning up to the track to watch us drive and we're kind of a little bit restricted, obviously with the engine mileage and also with the tyres, so it'd be cool if we had a little bit more tyre life, then we would do some more running. But otherwise it was no different for me. The car felt good in qualifying.

Q: And in dry conditions, how do you feel?

LH: Yesterday was not a good day for me, so I struggled through P1 and obviously didn't get to run through P1 and then P2, the car wasn't very good. But we made some changes so I'm hoping... it's kinda strange because we made all those changes overnight and then today it's been wet so I've no idea if it's in the right direction. It looked good in the wet so hopefully it's the same tomorrow in the dry.

Q: So in a way you go into the race tomorrow with a bit of an unknown car.

LH: Yeah, definitely. I do particularly, because I missed P1. So it's a little bit of an unknown – but it shouldn't be too far off.

Q: Daniel, this circuit, just looking at the streams across the track, the changing condition, the rain came and went... tell us all about that.

DR: Yeah it's a challenging circuit, I think, in general. Especially when a bit of water falls on the track it always makes it more challenging wherever you are. And there's a few places across the track here where there's a tarmac change and you get quite a big difference in grip through some of these corners – so trying to basically find the right line and the best way to drive around, particularly these trickier parts of the track with tarmac changes, is a bit complex. Took a bit of time to understand that but I think we got it in the end. Looking forward to tomorrow. If it's dry I think we can race up the front. I'll be ducking my head down the straight, like in a go-kart but yeah, we'll hopefully hang on and fight for at least a podium I hope.

Q: And how do you feel going into the race in dry conditions?

DR: Yeah, as I say I think we've got a good chance to at least stay up the pointy end. It's probably going to be a big strategy game tomorrow with two or three stop. It's pretty close. If you can make a two-stop work successfully I think it's going to help out but y'know, we'll see what happens in 24 hours.

Q: Sebastian, pleased to be back in our press conference again, in third place?

SV: I missed probably one race, so it's not a disaster.

LH: He's been in quite a few times over the years so...

Q: But in terms of being competitive again and in the dry, you didn't sound as though you were very convinced you would be [competitive] in the dry but perhaps in the wet more so?

SV: Yeah, just if you take yesterday as a reference we were in good shape but I think missing the Ferraris this afternoon compared to yesterday afternoon. Yeah, we knew that in wet conditions probably we can be a little bit closer probably similar to what we've seen so far in qualifying, unfortunately only in Australia, where Daniel I think finished... qualified P2. Malaysia we were pretty close and again here. Maybe not that close this time but closer than we were yesterday probably... and the last race.

Q: And in terms of the race tomorrow, what's the major factor? It's interesting to see how much wind there is out there.

SV: They say the weather should be fine tomorrow but I think around here you cannot really trust the weather forecast, so the best is to look out the window in the morning and see what you have. I think that's fairly much the plan. In terms of tyres a bit compromised for the race, should it be wet, because we used most of the tyres today but I think most people were confident to do so because tomorrow should be dry so long story short we expect dry conditions and hopefully we can finish similar to where we started.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo On Line) Sebastian, you have a more competitive teammate this year; does it change your approach to the weekend?

SV: Well, that's a compliment to Mark, I should say, in his absence. I think this year is very very different, the cars are very different so I don't think you can compare last year to this year, first of all, but nevertheless, I think Daniel is doing a very good job, he has not just had one good weekend, he had good weekends and so far he seems to be able to get the maximum out of the car. On my side, maybe I'm struggling a little bit more, but at the end of the day we have the same car – there's nothing between cars, so if he manages to beat me, then he beats me on the circuit, fair and square. Of course, that's not to my liking but equally, I know that I have to do a little bit better.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Daniel and Sebastian, there are two Red Bulls in front of one Mercedes; do you think there is a chance that we see a Red Bull winning tomorrow or are the Mercedes untouchable?

SV: Well, I think if we put two chicanes in all the straights then yes.

DR: The idea is to get a good start for both of us and just drive side by side the whole race and then just fight it out on the last lap! Yeah, I don't know. Realistically we have to wait and see but if we do I'm sure it won't come easy.

SV: But do you agree on the chicanes still?

LH: Nah.

SV: It was worth a try!

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Daniel, you said you only found the right grip on the last run; was it because of what you explained before, because you had to find the lines where the tarmac changes or was it because you used different tyre pressures or whatever at the end? And can you tell us where the tarmac changes here at the circuit?

DR: I think that with a bit more water than we had this morning – I only did one timed lap this morning – but with a bit more water out there this afternoon, it probably changed more than I expected so maybe some of the lines or the approaches I had on track this morning had altered a bit. Yeah, it took me a little bit of time, I guess, to figure that out. With tarmac changes, there's a couple across the track but the main one I think that we feel in the race car is probably turn eight, I think, it's after the long fast left and then into turn eight, there's a tarmac change there and the car sort of bounces around a bit there. That's just a bit of a challenge, I guess, in these conditions, so trying to get around there was... fun.

Saturday report

Daniel Ricciardo topped the timesheets for Red Bull at the end of a wet FP3 in Shanghai that saw a number of drivers elect to stay in the garage rather than set timed laps. With no time set by either Mercedes driver or FP2 pace-setter Fernando Alonso, Ricciardo's half-second advantage at the end of FP3 was by no means a guarantee of pole in qualifying.

Qualifying got underway in the wet, and with worsening conditions predicted there was a queue of traffic when the pit lane opened to mark the start of the session, with teams keen to set a banker time as early as possible. The formation laps saw offs aplenty, with numerous drivers taking advantage of the wide run-off areas before returning to the track.

Early timed laps were all set on extreme wets, with drivers lapping around the two-minute mark. Nico Rosberg was the first to show a significant improvement, crossing the line in 1m56.351s. Despite complaining of a number of issues earlier in the day, Sebastian Vettel's first lap was a (temporarily) P3-worthy 1m57.974s, half a second slower than Lewis Hamilton's first effort.

At the back of the pack, Pastor Maldonado stayed in the garage with a sensor issue for the first half of Q1, while Esteban Gutierrez, Marcus Ericsson, Adrian Sutil, Max Chilton, and Romain Grosjean all lurked in the dropout zone, roughly five seconds off the pace set by Rosberg and Hamilton, who were split by a tenth at the top of the timesheets.

As the session began to wind down, Maldonado was still stuck in the garage. Joining him in the dropout zone were the driver pairings from Caterham and Marussia plus Gutierrez, with Sutil lurking on the edge. At the top of the timesheets as the clock counted down was Vettel, who managed a 1m55.926s lap in his RB10 before being dropped by Hamilton who set a time of 1m55.516s.

Weather conditions were unchanged for the start of Q2, with the bulk of the pack hitting the track in the first two minutes of the session. But the track was slightly drier than it had been, and the intermediate tyre looked like less of a gamble than had been the case ten minutes earlier.

Again it was Mercedes who were the early pacesetters, with Hamilton leading the pack with a 1m55.200s lap while Rosberg was in second with a 1m55.613s effort. But the Red Bull pair were soon in the mix, with Daniel Ricciardo knocking Alonso out of his P3 spot before Vettel popped up in P2 with a 1m54.888s lap.

With just over five minutes to go it was Kevin Magnussen, Sutil, Jean-Eric Vergne, Nico Hulkenberg, Felipe Massa, and Sergio Perez who were in the dropout zone, with Daniil Kvyat and Jenson Button on the edge. The final minutes saw all sixteen out on track, with times changing constantly. When the chequered flag fell it was Kimi Raikkonen, Button, Kvyat, Sutil, Magnussen, and Perez who were knocked out.

Worsening conditions towards the end of Q2 made the top ten shoot-out a challenging affair, with Vettel – the first to set a time – half a second slower in Q3 than he had been in Q2. Hamilton's first Q3 lap was good enough for provisional pole, but at 1m54.348s it was three-tenths slower than his best Q2 effort. Rosberg rounded out the provisional top three with a 1m55.143s effort, with Ricciardo in P4 and four-tenths behind. Alonso was a further second behind in P5, with the top ten split by 3.567s.

In the dying minutes Ricciardo dropped his teammate down to a provisional P3, while Hamilton improved to 1m53.860s. Rosberg's attempt to get back up into the top three saw him spin at the finish line, the prone Silver Arrow in Vettel's way as the defending champion – who had improved, but not enough for P2 – crossed the line.

Provisional grid

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m53.860s
2. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m54.455s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m54.960s
4. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m55.143s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m55.637s
6. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m56.147s
7. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m56.282s
8. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m56.366s
9. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m56.773s
10. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m57.079s

11. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m56.860s
12. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m56.963s
13. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m57.289s
14. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m57.393s
15. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m57.675s
16. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m58.264s

17. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m58.988s
18. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m59.260s
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m59.326s
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) 2m00.646s
21. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 2m01.865s
22. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) NO TIME SET *

* Pastor Maldonado will start the Chinese Grand Prix from P22, having qualified in P22, thanks to a five-place grid penalty earned for his collision with Esteban Gutierrez in Bahrain.

Friday press conference

Shanghai's technical personnel press conference was an all-engine affair, with the paddock's heavy hitters – present and future – called in to talk power units.

Present were Yasuhisa Arai (Honda), Andy Cowell (Mercedes AMG HPP), Pat Fry (Ferrari), Rob White (RenaultSportFl), and Charlie Whiting (FIA).

Q: If we can start with you Charlie? The new power units have excited a lot of debate since the beginning of the year. Will you

once again briefly take us through the philosophy behind this technology and why F1 believes it was the right time to introduce it?

Charlie WHITING: I think it was fairly clear, we're going back a little while now, that Formula One, being the foremost single seat category, should be at the forefront of technology. I think it was also clear at the time that the motor manufacturers were also looking towards conservation. So we felt we had to go that way. I think to ignore that would have been rather silly. I think we would have possibly lost some manufacturers and certainly deterred others from coming in.

Q: I guess efficiency plays a part in that as well?

CW: Of course that was the major goal. We started four years ago with the engine manufacturers. We had quite a big meeting with lots of them assembled in Paris. It was the 27th of April, in fact, in 2010. We assembled them all together and the initial goal was to have a 50 per cent increase in efficiency but over a period of time that became diluted somewhat because it appeared that was rather ambitious for the start of this new engine era. So we ended up with what we have now and that is an engine that everyone can see is about 35 per cent more efficient than the previous engines.

Q: So, Andy Cowell, does that represent a small step in the right direction or a giant leap?

Andy COWELL: It represents a giant leap – going from internal combustion engines, naturally aspirated at about 30 per cent thermal efficiency up to engines where we're all targeting 40 per cent thermal efficiency is a huge step, a huge introduction of new technology both on the internal combustion engine for efficiency and also on the two energy recovery systems that we've got on the power unit.

Q: What do Mercedes expect to get from this project in terms of technology that can be eventually transferred to the road? Is that a long way in the future or is it already happening?

AC: It's already happening. The regulations were specifically written to take some of the ideas already in the road car world, so downsizing, downspeeding and turbocharging but adding some new, interesting technologies in there such as the electric turbocharger as a specific example and those sort of projects are already being worked on.

Q: Can I ask the same question of Rob White? What does Renault expect to get from this project in terms of road cars?

Rob WHITE: It's a big leap, as Andy says. I share the remarks that transfers are already happening. The transfers are not only specific technologies, the e-turbo being one of them, but also the fundamental alignment of the mission we have. Our challenge now is to race, to go as fast as we can with the given fuel allocation, which is a very, very similar mission to our road car colleagues who have to use the smallest amount of fuel to get a given mission done and that's extremely close.

Q: There's been quite a lot of talk about how the power units are contributing to racing and we've heard some unusual suggestions for things that might be changed. Firstly, do you think there are problems with the racing this year? Secondly, what do you think of ideas such as shortening races, raising fuel limits etc. Do those suggestions miss the point?

RW: The main problem I see so far is that Andy has won rather more than I'd like and we have won less than I'd like. The specific suggestions are just shifting the goalposts rather than doing anything fundamental and I think as Charlie indicated the basic parameters that we're now racing with were decided well upstream in sufficient time that we knew what to do with them. I honestly feel that the numbers were well judged and I think the 100kg/h fuel limit and the 100kg for the race, as well as having the benefit of being nice round numbers, also play out more or less as predicted in terms of the level of performance and the level of fuel saving needed to get to the end of the race. I think we've seen in the early races that there hasn't been an excessive amount of fuel saving that would perhaps have damaged the show. I think we've seen more recently, particularly in Bahrain... We all enjoyed the race there, it was the first one I saw from the comfort of my living room and it was certainly an exciting one to watch.

Q: Now we've heard from two of the manufacturers currently involved in F1 but let's get the thoughts of a manufacturer that will next year return to the sport after six seasons away? Thank you very much Mr Arai for coming to our press conference. What is it in the new regulations that has encouraged Honda to come back into Formula One at this time?

Yasuhisa ARAI: Thank you very much. I am delighted to be here and to be given this opportunity by the FIA to speak at this conference. As you mentioned we will return in the year 2015 for the Formula One. One of the major reasons for our decision was the new regulation introduced this year and that the various environment... I mean green technologies in the new Formula One power unit, as well as the total energy management are both very challenging and significant. The new regulation encourages each power unit supplier to pursue the ultimate combustion efficiency and high pressure direct injections, such as many, many new technologies. Thus the challenge is to convert each unit of gasoline into energy and this is expected to be reflected on the huge production mode. That's the reason why.

Q: You're setting up a new base at Milton Keynes in the United Kingdom. What will that facility be responsible for in the coming years?

YA: That, we will open June this year. Now still under construction but that factory is to do the engine maintenance for the races and rebuilding the Formula One engine and also to go to the race-track for the trackside service. That's Milton Keynes.

Q: Pat, as someone more responsible for the chassis side of things at Ferrari, let's talk about how you integrate these new power units with the cars. Have you found that the chassis and engine departments have needed to work closer together this year or is the relationship pretty much the same as always?

Pat FRY: I think with the changes to the power unit this year, there's obviously a huge amount more technology to understand and that has definitely pulled the chassis department and the engine department closer together. That starts everywhere from the simple, basic simulations that you do before an event to tuning the car. Everything is now inter-related. So where you used to play with a diff and brake balance and whatever, you've now got all the various ERS levels of charging and deciding what to do with waste gates and turbos. So there's a huge amount more interaction between the two groups.

Q: Has the engine department given you a power unit on the minimum weight or are you having to shed weight from the car?

PF: We're fairly close to the weight limit. I'm sure everyone is struggling. The combination of an engine on the weight limit and just all the bits and pieces we want on a standard car, it's quite a challenge to get down to the weight limit anyway. But yeah, we're just on that limit.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Question to Andy and Rob and Mr Arai if you would like to contribute as well please: Andy, you were talking about 40 per cent efficiency. Now, we've got relatively immature technology at the moment. What sort of progress in terms of efficiency do you engine manufacturers foresee over the seven-year lifecycle of these engines?

AC: It's a difficult one to predict. We're working hard to improve the efficiency of the internal combustion engine, make sure that every single drop of fuel that goes in... and that's where working with Petronas helps tremendously to get us to the point we're at today and to move forwards race by race with fuel developments. And then it's just mastering the conversion efficiencies – so every single step where we're converting the energy, just improving little by little and then with a new power unit homologated next year. I guess I'm not coming up with a prediction for exactly how much we're going to improve year by year – but I imagine it's going to be very similar to when we were in the naturally-aspirated era, where there were times when we thought 13,000rpm was impressive and we all ended up well over 20,000rpm. So it'll be a similar level of development.

RW: I think Andy was cautious when saying 40 per cent. I think to be competitive you need to be a bit better than 40 per cent already. I think we shouldn't underestimate just how important that is in terms of automotive technology. I think these power units are fantastic pieces of kit in terms of the raw, thermal efficiency that is achieved. Better than any road car engine by a margin. And I think it's also important to draw attention to the fact that the energy management challenge is also part of the real efficiency of the race car which is in addition to the thermal efficiency of the power unit. There will be rapid progress even during the course of this year. We've seen progress in the early races without any change to the underlying

hardware. That's something that will continue during the season. That's something that will take another step forward over the winter – as Andy as suggested – when we homologate a new version of the power unit for 2015. This is another mirror-image of what happens in the big, wide world outside, where every iteration of our road car product brings with it a significant step forward in fuel consumption, which of course is the same thing for us: a step forward in performance for the same fuel flow or fuel limit.

Q: Mr Arai, would you like to comment or is it a bit too early for you to make any predictions?

YA: There is a strange feeling because our door for 2015 is still not open yet. So I can make just a small comment. How to make the good efficiency is just a three major fields. Technology fields. One is combustion itself – combustion chamber design, another one is how to recover the energy, that's very important for these new regulations and finally the torque management. Positive and negative torque management is very important to make a good, fast car. That's my comment.

Q: (Gary Anderson – Autosport) As you were saying Andy, revs, that's always been the push, everybody wanted to get more revs, more revs, more revs. This year the regulation maximum is 15,000 but on a good day you might see twelve. Do you see that changing, and if it did change do you see that helping the noise?

AC: You're correct with regard to the revs that we're running on the track. I don't see that changing, I don't see the need for the revs to change to change the noise of the power unit. The principal reason why the engine is quieter is the turbine wheel and the muffling effect that you get from that. That's one of the key technologies for recycling the waste energy that would normally go down the tailpipe so it's a key aspect of the technology that we've got. There are other things we can do though with the tailpipe, perhaps, to change the noise.

Q: (Gary Anderson – Autosport) Could I just add a second part: why is it 12,000 rpm instead of 15,000rpm?

AC: The fundamental reason is the fuel flow rate formula so you get the 100 kilograms per hour once you're at 10,500 rpm. If you rev an engine faster, you generate more friction and friction is the enemy of an engine and the enemy of a race car because you have to reject it to the radiators and there's then an aerodynamic deficit from doing that. None of us want to be below 10,500 rpm but none of us want to be at high revs because all you do is create heat.

RW: There's not much to add. The fuel flow curve, the fuel law is the thing that fixes the engine speed as Andy indicated. We hear a little bit less about the slope below 10,500 than the maximum which is 100 kilos but it is that knee point that fixes the rpm at which the engines make the best power and best efficiency and the engine speed above that is to do with the spread needed to pass the gear ratios.

Q: (Marc Surer – Sky Germany) It's in a similar direction, my question for the motor engineers: what can you do to increase the noise? There's a lot of talk about it but I haven't heard a solution yet.

RW: First thing to say is that the noise of the current engine is a consequence of the overall layout, the architecture and so forth. I think in terms of the possible adjustments to change the noise it makes, I think we're at the beginning of a consultative process that will kick off in about an hour's time. Andy's alluded to tail pipe changes – that's something that could be a way to go. I think the scope to fundamentally and profoundly alter the noise of the engines is extremely limited by the type of technology that we have deployed and therefore I think we need to be realistic about the scope of any action that we might take but of course we're sensitive to the subject and we'll certainly participate in any of the studies that might lead to actions being taken.

PF: I think the engine people in the room know the problem a lot more than I do. I think what Andy said about... you've got the turbo there to try and take all the energy that we can out, so it's always going to be quieter. There's a round of meetings starting today, in fact, that will discuss and try and work out how to improve the situation.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Mr Arai, if we have a look at Mercedes, they're supplying their own team and three customers. Renault are doing four customers: Ferrari are doing one plus two. Next year, you've got McLaren. Could you give us some insight into your plans for both 2015 and thereafter in terms of customer teams, whether your relationship with McLaren actually permits that, please?

YA: So, for year 2015, McLaren is our only customer. I don't think about the future, because we want to concentrate on next season.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) I understand your philosophy there but surely you must have done costing and recovery against the units and that must surely include some sort of sale or customer-type project or do you not have any plans for customers at all?

YA: Of course we want to have good results next season and see the results from other manufacturers. Please chose our power unit for next season. If teams want to use our engine or power unit, we can deliver after year 2016 but right now there are no plans.

Q: (Gary Anderson – FOM) Rob, it's been fairly well documented that you obviously haven't started the season the way you intended to. Do Renault need any concessions from other manufacturers or the FIA, to do the improvements that you need or are you happy to work within the regulations and do what you're allowed at the moment to catch up?

RW: I think the first thing to say is that the technical and sporting regulations are the same for all the engine suppliers. We knew what we were getting into and we're in it now. We're not lobbying for any regulatory change. I think that for the time being our priority is to continue the recovery actions that we've put in place and I expect to pursue that over the course of this season.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Question to Charlie: the rules allow changes to the engines if it is for reliability, cost-saving and safety. But let's say if you do a change for reliability reasons and you make a certain component stronger, isn't that – let's say – automatically gaining horsepower through the back door?

CW: I think that the system that we have now is the same as it's been since 2006. If an engine manufacturer asks for changes for reliability, we always assess that, we always try to see if there is a possible – as you put it – back door route to get more performance but we are absolutely confident that the changes that we've allowed so far this season are purely for reliability and we also have the fall-back of consulting all the other engine manufacturers so if we agree to some changes for reliability and we then circulate it among the other engine manufacturers, they have the opportunity to highlight any potential back door treatment, as you put it.

Friday report

While Mercedes didn't dominate Friday's running in Shanghai, with Lewis Hamilton topping the second practice session as Fernando Alonso was fastest in the first, it looked as though the Silver Arrows were keeping some pace in reserve for Saturday's qualifying.

Alonso showed consistently strong pace in both sessions, but it would be a stretch to presume that any responsibility for Ferrari's improvement has come from new team principal Marco Mattiacci's short time in the role. Instead, it is the characteristics of the Shanghai track that played into the hands of the F14 T – both power and traction have less of a role to play here than they do at other circuits on the calendar.

It was not all smiles in the Ferrari garage, with Kimi Raikkonen failing to set a timed lap in F1 following a suspension issue. The afternoon saw the Finn finish seventh, with 25 laps under his belt. Hamilton was another man whose running was affected by suspension trouble, which emerged in the morning and curtailed his track time in the afternoon as the team worked to solve the problem.

The morning proved to be a troublesome one for several of the teams – in addition to the suspension issues suffered by Raikkonen and Hamilton, Sergio Perez lost out on track time thanks to a sticky DRS, Esteban Gutierrez was beset by clutch issues and a problem with his ERS, and Jules Bianchi struggled with a faulty fuel system. Otherwise, the cool temperatures saw many struggle for grip, with numerous spins throughout the field.

The afternoon's running was smoother for all but Pastor Maldonado, who – having already had an embarrassing F1 crash while changing a setting on his steering wheel – ploughed into the barriers at the pit entry half an hour into FP2. The Venezuelan's suspension was damaged in the process, and it was not possible for the team to get him back out before the chequered flag fell, leaving Maldonado at a significant disadvantage going into the rest of the weekend.

FP1 times (unofficial)

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m39.783s [20 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m40.181s [16 laps]
3. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m40.772s [23 laps]
4. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m40.970s [23 laps]
5. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m41.175s [16 laps]
6. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m41.366s [20 laps]
7. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m41.505s [26 laps]
8. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m41.560s [9 laps]
9. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m41.629s [19 laps]
10. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m41.699s [14 laps]
11. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m41.977s [23 laps]
12. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m42.090s [24 laps]
13. Felipe Nasr (Williams) 1m42.265s [13 laps]
14. Giedo van der Garde (Sauber) 1m42.615s [16 laps]
15. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m42.733s [13 laps]
16. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m43.731s [22 laps]
17. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m44.038s [16 laps]
18. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m44.162s [17 laps]
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m44.270s [7 laps]
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m44.782s [20 laps]
21. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m44.835s [22 laps]
22. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) NO TIME SET [1 lap]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m38.315s [25 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m38.456s [28 laps]
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m38.726s [30 laps]
4. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m38.811s [30 laps]
5. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m39.015s [31 laps]
6. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m39.118s [25 laps]
7. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m39.283s [25 laps]
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m39.491s [29 laps]
9. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m39.537s [36 laps]
10. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m39.648s [26 laps]
11. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m39.736s [30 laps]
12. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m39.744s [29 laps]
13. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m39.759s [28 laps]
14. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m39.830s [25 laps]
15. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m40.124s [32 laps]
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m40.359s [32 laps]
17. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m40.395s [30 laps]
18. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 1m40.455s [12 laps]
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m42.327s [27 laps]
20. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m43.473s [30 laps]
21. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m43.530s [32 laps]
22. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m43.679s [32 laps]

Thursday press conference

Following some big news this week for two of the participants in the drivers' press conference in Shanghai, the session focused on the future at Ferrari.

Present were Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber), Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Sergio Perez (Force India), Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull), and Adrian Sutil (Sauber).

Q: Daniel, some bad news earlier on at the start of this week for you, what was your reaction to that?

Daniel RICCIARDO: Obviously a little bit disappointed but at the same time I had moved on already. I think Sunday night in Melbourne the damage was already done and I went from a big high to a pretty big low, so I'd sort of already moved on. I hoped but didn't really expect too much to come from it. So that's it. I'm here now in Shanghai and that's it. There's no more ifs or buts, it's here, I have 12 points and I just have to play catch-up.

Q: Fernando, it's also been an interesting week for you with some interesting news from the team.

Fernando ALONSO: Yeah, there has been some news from the team and we're here to try to improve the situation a little bit, be a little bit more competitive, more than we have shown in the first three races. We're here to fight back.

Q: Is that slightly unsettling for you?

FA: I think we need to be honest with our situation. It's not where we wanted to be. I think there is a lot of room to improve. We need to become better in all the areas from the car. There is a long way to go, the championship is very long and we know that probably in the first (part) of the championship we will not be as competitive as Mercedes or some of the teams that now they are on top but as I said we need to maximise what we have in our hands now, try to score as many points as possible and hopefully we can be very competitive later in the season.

Q: Lewis, a fantastic race for you in Bahrain and an interesting quote from you saying it was a “real racer’s race”, using the skills that you had acquired as a karter. Are we going to see lots more of that and have you had a look at the race and seen what was happening all the way down the field?

Lewis HAMILTON: Yeah, it was quite an exciting race, I got to spend some time at home with the family at the weekend and we watched the highlights. Yeah, it was quite interesting to see the duel between each team and between team-mates. As I said it was a bit more like a go-kart race. Whether or not it will always be like that... that was a great race, I hope there are more races like that through the year.

Q: It was always interests me, as a karting dad, as I have been, when you guys start talking about karting and how it is the purest form of racing. It's extraordinary that you can race like that, almost like a karter, in a Formula One car.

LH: Yeah, it is. You don't see it too often. Obviously in karting you don't have downforce, you just have mechanical grip, so it is more exciting in general. But to have the staggered tyres, difference between different cars enabling that racing in the last race was quite unique.

Q: Well any time you like: we'd like some more of it. Esteban can I come to you now? First of all, you said this was one of your best races last year. Obviously we saw you end the last race in not the best way and hopefully there is no lasting damage but tell us about this race from your point of view.

Esteban GUTIERREZ: Well, yes it was very challenging, especially as the performance at the moment is not where we want to be and this puts everything in a very difficult position. The whole team is really pushing very hard, we are trying to recover our pace and to really be where we belong and where we are aiming to. We have a great team behind and everyone is pushing very hard to achieve that very soon, hopefully very soon.

Q: And you were perfectly alright the next day after the crash?

EG: Yeah definitely. Nothing happened. This was the most important thing on the weekend and on the incident as well, apart from really actually what happened. Afterwards it was just necessary to do all the check up and be sure that everything was fine.

Q: Sergio, obviously an excellent race for you in Bahrain as well. What is it that's making Force India so competitive at the moment?

Sergio PÉREZ: It was a great race for the team as well. Nico finishing fifth, a lot of points, second in the Constructors' so it's a big motivation for the team. Right now we are maximising every opportunity that we are having. I had a little bit of a difficult start of the season, I struggled in Malaysia with some issues. We managed to come into Bahrain and do a great job and I think right now we have a good package with Mercedes but I think as well the car. We're beating all the other Mercedes engine [customers], so we're doing a good job as a team, we are maximising what we have and hopefully we can... we come into a different challenge here in China, very different track to Bahrain so I think it will be a good target for us to try to do as good as we did in Bahrain. It will be a big challenge for us here.

Q: Adrian, I think there's quite a few areas that Sauber have to improve. Did you make some progress at the test? What are the areas still to work on?

Adrian SUTIL: Yes. A little progress has been made at the test with the test drivers in Bahrain, so it was quite conclusive. Of course at the moment we are far too slow. Not really enjoyable but we are looking ahead. It will get better. It's just a question of time. We need to be a bit patient. So, for here, there are a few things changed already. So, I'm quite excited to see how the car will be. But our plan, especially for the next races going to Europe and going to Barcelona and on, the car should definitely be a different one to drive. It's not only one area, quite a few areas of the car. It's the power unit, it's the weight – and I'm fighting also personally a little bit here and there. It will get there and as soon as we do progress every race weekend, I'm happy. Fingers crossed it's going to happen very soon.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) Fernando, the new team principle of Ferrari, Marco Mattiacci has no experience related to Formula One. Could it be an issue in your opinion, or not?

FA: Well, I think we need to give him time and try to see how he settles down. It's too early to say if, y'know, it will be a very good thing or very bad. I think we need to make sure he has all the facilities ready, all the technical stuff ready, all the team behind him, try to help him settle down as fast as possible. And, yes, try to put him in a condition to feel comfortable from day one. I certainly hope... we are really hoping it will be a successful managing of the team and everyone is looking forward.

Q: (Kate Walker – Crash.net) We've heard an awful lot about this year's technology and how it's changing the future of Formula One. Looking further ahead, how do you see the role of the driver evolving as the technology becomes more complex?

FA: I think it's going to be pretty similar to what we saw in the last couple of years. Drivers still have an input on the result and developing the car – but as we know Formula One is a category that is dominated by the performance of the car, in a way. We saw in Bahrain also in the last couple of laps, they were fighting two team-mates, two team-mates, two team-mates until the tenth or twelfth position. It's difficult to get away from that order. It has been more or less like this in the past. I don't see any big difference. Probably it's a little bit more extreme now with all the technology as you said. In the past there were some strange cases in races like Monaco or things like that, maybe a midfield car could fight for a podium etcetera. In this last couple of years it's difficult to see that but, y'know, you take it or you go in another category. It is what it is.

SP: I fully agree with Fernando. I think you are as good as your car. The level your team is and the performance your team has. We've seen it in the past. Drivers changing teams and sometimes you can be in a very good team and show very strong potential, win some races. Sometimes you don't even go into the points – and it's related to the level of the car. But I think the drivers still have a big influence on the development and the result but it's a factor now that Formula One is dominated by the car and how quick your car can be.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – Universo On Line) Fernando, what were you celebrating at the end of the last race as you took the chequered flag and took your hand out of the cockpit and punched the air?

FA: Yeah, I was saying thanks to the mechanics. I said it a hundred times after the race also. They'd been working hard on Saturday. As you know, we had a problem on the engine side, on the power unit that slowed us a little bit in Q1, Q2 and then furthermore in Q3. We didn't have the solution for the problem, even on Sunday at 12 o' clock so we still were not completely sure that the car was perfectly OK and then in the race, we had everything in place – they did a fantastic job so when we crossed the line, they were on the pit wall saying hallo and I said hallo to them.

Q: (Luigi Perna – La Gazzetta dello Sport) Fernando, it was quite shocking, the replacement of the team principal after three races. I don't know if you agree but in your opinion, is that enough to solve the problem – to save the season – or not?

FA: Well, I think we need to assess what Stefano decided. He was probably not any more in the mood to continue and with the feeling of taking the weight on his shoulders. He made a very responsible move. It's not easy, when you have a very privileged position in one Formula One team to be able to step back and to say 'maybe it's better to move'. But he did it, just for Ferrari's interest and improvement so that's something that we cannot forget and now we have to respect that decision. From that point, for sure, it's not that in this race we will improve one second, because I don't think Stefano was doing the front wing or the rear wing or whatever by his hands, so probably we need to wait a little bit of time and see what we can improve and try to help all the team with the new people coming to make us a little bit stronger and try to get back some of the success from the past.

Q: (Qian Jun – Oriental Morning Post) To all of you, this year the FIA has introduced a penalty point system. After just three Grands Prix, Jules Bianchi has four points and Pastor has three points. Do you think anybody will reach 12 points this season, and what's your opinion on this regulation?

AS: I think it's OK. I'm not sure if anyone will reach the full 12 but after three races, having four, then he should reach it very soon. Let's see how it's going to be. Most important is that there was a change from last year because there were at certain times some penalties, especially for the

backmarkers, which were not doing anything. If you're last and you get a ten place penalty you're still last and that's it. This is a little bit different and I think there was a reason why it should be changed and now we need a little bit of time to see if it is working. I hope so.

DR: Yeah, I think you reach L2 if you're a bad boy but yeah, I think this system is OK. It's trying to keep us in line, really, so if it helps then yeah.

EG: I think it's a good system. It puts some conscience on ourselves to not do wrong moves and to respect each other and to race in a fair way, which is how racing should be.

Q: (Luis Fernando Ramos – Racing Magazine) To Lewis and Fernando, as World Champions. We will have the 20th anniversary of Ayrton Senna's death in a few weeks. I wanted to ask what are your memories from that day and if Senna was the driver that you most looked up to when you were in karting in those days?

LH: Yeah. For me, it's not unknown, I always comment on it: when I was a kid I had all the books, all the videos, he was the driver I looked up to, way before I even started racing. He kind of inspired me to even be a driver and of course, on the day of his passing, his death was... it was very difficult for me to show my emotions in my family so I went off to a quiet place and it was very difficult for several days to really... your hero's gone. But an incredible legend: you can still learn things from how he approached racing and how he drove. You like to think that one day you may be recognised as someone that was able to drive similarly to him.

FA: Yeah, the same for me: he was an inspiration. I remember some of the races that we could see in the news in Spain, because we didn't have the TV coverage of Formula One, but yeah, I remember I went to school – on my book, I didn't have (pictures of) girls, obviously I was too young to have girls on the book but I had Ayrton there and the same in my room. I had a big poster of Ayrton and even my first go-karts were in the colours of Ayrton's McLaren because my father also liked him. It was a very sad moment. I know there is something happening at Imola in Italy in the next weekends and I intend to be there, just to be close on this unfortunately important day.

Q: (Jerome Bourret – L'Equipe) Fernando, have you already had a discussion with your new team principal about the things you would like to change in the team and if not, what are the points you would like to discuss with him?

FA: No, I haven't had the chance... I don't know if he's coming here, I guess so, so it would be a good time to welcome him. I don't really have much to say. I drive the car. He will be good enough to recognise what are the weak areas of the team, what are the strong areas of the team and hopefully improve them. I think that as drivers, we will try to drive as fast as we can, Kimi and I, and try to help him in whatever field our help is required.

Q: (David Croft – Sky Sports F1) Fernando, you've worked and driven under a variety of team principals in Formula One. Where would Stefano Domenicali rank amongst your other team bosses and what do you think Ferrari will miss most about him?

FA: I think that Stefano was a great man, first of all. I'm a close friend of his, not just on the circuit. We ski together every January 1st in Italy in the mountains. We still have a close relationship. We've been talking all the week long. I think that will continue, because we have known each for many years and we have worked very closely for this couple of years, so that's important, to separate work from friendship. Then, as a team principal, I think he made good choices, good things. Obviously we missed opportunities in 2010, in 2012. They missed opportunities in 2008 with Felipe (Massa). If not, he could probably have three championships in his pocket. I think he brought in Pat Fry, he brought James Allison, Raikkonen, so I think all the things that people ask from him he was giving to them, probably, as I said, the results in the sports are important and the pressure at Ferrari is also quite big, so he made his decision which we respect and we will try to move forward in different directions but try to move forward. I'm happy with the time that we passed together.
