

Fl Germany Blog - Sunday press conference

It was a jubilant group of German journalists that greeted triple world champion Sebastian Vettel in the post-race press conference following the Red Bull racer's first home victory.

Present were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus), and Romain Grosjean (Lotus).

Q: Sebastian, tell the world how sweet a taste is this home victory?

Sebastian VETTEL: Yeah, it's unbelievable. I'm very, very happy, an unbelievable race. Kimi was pushing very, very hard in the end and obviously they tried to do something different with different compound tyres. I think we had a very solid, very controlled race but I was pushing, I think, every single lap, except the laps behind the Safety Car. Very happy with the result and incredible to finally win in Germany.

Q: At the closing stages of the race you felt the warm breath of this guy [Räikkönen] in your neck so what do you think about driving with this guy next year together in one team?

SV: Well, I don't know. I think first of all I enjoy today and, yeah, I could feel him coming and more and more pressure but yeah, I obviously had a couple of laps where it was quite close with Romain as well who tried to push very hard. In the middle of the race we lost KERS for a couple of laps so it was very difficult - but fortunately the system recovered and yeah, it's very useful to defend properly. Very happy that the race ended after 60 laps and not 61 or 62.

Q: Kimi, was it better for you that the radio had some problems and you couldn't understand the guy from the pit wall?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: No actually - I could hear them but they couldn't hear me. I think it only worked in one part of the circuit and unfortunately today there was quite a lot to discuss and it didn't work. So, not the ideal but we managed to do pretty well and obviously we want to win but today we didn't have the speed. The race should have been a bit longer, maybe then we could have had a good chance - but we scored good points for two cars and we are getting back where we should be. So in the end not ideal but pretty OK for us.

Q: Romain, how good is it being back on the podium, even if it is now the third position and not the second if that could be?

Romain GROSJEAN: It's good, it's a good result for the team. We had a very strong race, which is good. Very good first stint. I thought I would have had a chance at one stage on Seb but the Red Bull was quick today. And then at the end we choose different strategy with the team. I think that was the right things to do - just put one car on one tyres and the other one on the other one, and it appears the Option for Kimi was quicker. So, yeah, I think it was good to play a little bit, the team, and then I'm very happy to be back on the podium. I think we've deserved it for a little while but now it's reality.

[Question in German]

SV: Obviously I felt the push from the crowd and yeah, obviously, I tried to focus the last couple of laps, knew it would be very close with Kimi once he gets past Romain, so yeah, incredibly tough, I was pushing every single lap as hard as I could and Lotus was incredibly quick today, looking after their tyres probably a little bit better than other people. But yeah, all in all, fantastic. Compliments to the team, three great stops we had. Very, very happy with the day.

Q: Sebastian, many congratulations. That was a tremendously entertaining race to watch for anybody who loves the sport. You were obviously made to work pretty hard for it. Your fourth win of the season [and the] 30th of your career. Clearly, the defining thing is that it's meant so much to you for such a long time and you've achieved so much in 26 years but just put into words what it means to finally win your home grand prix.

SV: Definitely a great relief. Very happy with how the day went. To be honest, for sure, there are a lot of expectations. Especially when you have a good car and for a couple of years you've had a good run, when you come to home soil people expect you to win. I think the whole team, including myself, we never ever let that get to our head but it just feels very, very sweet now to have succeeded after a couple of tries. Sometimes we were close. I think we had good races in the past in Germany as well, finished on the podium, which was a great experience but today, to win here, yeah. Both tracks, Hockenheim and Nürburgring mean a lot to me. To race in Germany I think is a privilege. To have the ability to have a home grand prix. Great relief, very happy, special day for sure. I think it take some little while to sink in but yeah, just incredibly proud today. The team did a fantastic job for strategy and for the pit stops. On the track it was so difficult. I pushed every single lap but it's so tough when you're on the edge and you know that you can't go over the tyres too much because then you will not reach the end of the stint. Equally, passing people, you know that you have to get through traffic as quick as you can, so not an easy race. The Safety Car didn't help us. We had a little bit of a cushion but Lotus was incredibly quick today and gave us definitely a big run for our money. I'm just very happy that it worked out. Last but not least our compliments to Pirelli. They did a very, very good job within a couple of days to react and bring a different rear tyre to this event. I think we didn't have any failures throughout the whole weekend. Compliments to them. They had a lot of criteria after the last race but it looked like they made up for it this race and hopefully for the next races we continue to have racing like that.

Q: Kimi, moving to you. Obviously Lotus were in a strong position. They could make a tactical gamble, put Red Bull on the back foot. From your point of view, you got through, Romain let you through towards the end. But was there a scenario where you could have won this race today?

KR: Obviously not, because we didn't win it. I was stuck behind the Mercedes after the first stop for a little while until I got past them. It cost me some time. After the Safety Car we were pretty OK and the cars, three of us, had similar speed and it's very difficult to overtake anybody. I could run longer and we had a think about it, if we can try to run until the end but we had a massive problem with the radio. I could hear them but they could only hear

me between two corners. So I'm wondering if we should have done it, take a gamble and try to go to the end because the tyres were pretty OK, my speed was pretty OK so it was hard to know what happens in the next ten laps. We decided to come in and put the soft tyres. We had good speed. Obviously I got some help from Romain to get past but that was... we would have had a big fight, anyhow. I could have probably passed him in a normal situation but obviously it would have cost me a lot of time. And as a team we try to win and I caught up with Seb but, like I said before, everybody was behind each other but we are too close on speeds and it's so difficult to overtake then. We tried everything that we had and failed to win but I think for the team we did a good race and got both cars on the podium, so as a team we're happy but obviously I lost some more points to Seb in the championship. We keep trying.

Q: Romain, great to see you back here in the top three again. Fantastic first stint that really played you into contention for this grand prix. Tell us about your race, about how you felt and also a little bit of detail maybe about the radio traffic that was going on.

RG: We had a good qualifying and the first stint has been amazing, seeing P1 on the board is always good. The car was working much better than what we thought on Option tyres. After the first pit stop Seb and myself were quite a long way ahead of everyone else and it was looking like we will try to see with strategy to adapt, to stop three stops depending on how we were going and then the Safety Car came. It made it easy for strategy but less good then for the traffic. Clearly then, as a team we had to put different eggs not in the same basket and change different strategy for Kimi and myself. It appears that Kimi's one worked better but it could have been the opposite. So, it's good to be back on the podium, good to score strong points. The summer is back on – which should help us to be more consistent at the front. But the first stint has been really good and finally getting car and tyres that work together, it's nice.

Q: (Leonid Novozhilov – FLife) Sebastian, what do you think about the weather today? Maybe the weather help you make a win, or no?

SV: Well first of all it's German weather. It's always like this in Germany. I think we were just a little unlucky the last couple of years. I think it didn't help us today. I think it made it a little bit more tricky. I think it helped probably Lotus a little bit. They were taking care of their tyres probably a little bit better than the rest of the field. By the looks of it they were very strong at the end of the stints – but I say that now, I don't have a proper look. But in the end we won today so we had good speed – good enough to win the race so I'm very happy but I think we were a little bit stronger on Friday than today.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Sebastian, when you came in for the third time, did you do it in order to cover Romain or did you come in anyway? Was it a plan to come in?

SV: No, I don't think it was the plan yet. Tyres were holding up OK and the gap to Romain was increasing a little bit again at that time. Just before the stop, a couple of laps, I lost KERS and I was able to switch it back on and pull away again. But obviously I think we try to cover him to make sure we stay ahead and we defend the lead because we saw that overtaking is quite tricky here. It's possible: I went through traffic pretty quickly but obviously there was a big delta in speed, in pace at that time. So, yeah, in order to make sure we stay ahead, we try to cover him.

Q: (Mark Ellerich – Sport1.de) How intense is the relief to get this done, with this win now? Did you have a plan to get it here in Germany, right now, this year?

SV: Yeah, I made it in January! No, in the end it's just another race and we try to prepare as much as we can for every race. Surely winning here is very special and tastes very very sweet, especially the way we won today with a lot of pressure from behind, but I think we did our homework – as much as we could – on Friday, the conditions changed a little bit and it was quite close today but we succeeded, that's the most important thing. Very happy to take the win today and also it's good to score some points.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Sebastian, Kimi is one of the men on the short list to replace Webber as your teammate next season. In the closing stages of the race, we saw him giving you quite a bit of challenge. How do you feel about the prospect of being challenged by a fellow World Champion in equal equipment for an entire season rather than just a few laps?

SV: Well, I wouldn't mind. I think he wasn't nice today to me because of that but in the end of the day, to be completely straight, it's not my decision. I think I have a good relationship with the team and to be honest, we spoke about that but not in detail yet. I think the team has no pressure to decide on anything, at least, that's what they communicated with me. I think I get along fairly well with Kimi; we never had a problem on track, even if one day we might have and crash into each other which can happen, then I think we deal with it as grown-ups and talk about it and sort it out amongst ourselves, at least, I think that's the relationship I have with him. I respect him a lot on and off track. But like I said, it's not my decision.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) Would you be excited by the challenge?

SV: Yeah, definitely. I think it's strange in a way because I was looking up to Kimi when he was with McLaren for many years and trying to give Michael a very hard time but his McLaren broke down many times and now, since he's come back, I've raced him again and I think there's no doubt that when it comes to qualifying, to race, he does his job very well and gets the maximum out of the car, and that's what – at the end of the day – is our job. He's quite good at what he does. That's my opinion.

Q: Kimi, give you an opportunity to respond to that.

KR: He seems to be a bit better. I don't know what will happen in the future. Things will be decided at some point but until that happens there's nothing to talk about. I would definitely tell if I know something just so that all these follow-up rumours and nonsense stops straight away. But right now, there's absolutely nothing for next year and we will see. For sure, at some point, once we know we will tell but I don't have any pressure to make any decision right now. Obviously I try to make the right decision for myself but it depends on many things; next year there are rule changes, everything else, so it can be a right or wrong decision. Whatever it will be, I will live with it and I'm fine with it. We will see when it comes.

Q: (Heikki Kulta – Turun Sanomat) Kimi, your best ever result in Germany. Does it taste any better than the previous ones or is it only victory that makes the difference?

KR: Obviously we are here to try and win races. We couldn't today because we were not fast enough but for the team it was a good result after a couple of quite difficult races, so obviously for my championship it was not ideal, we lost some more points but it's still a long season and if we keep putting ourselves in a position for at least fighting for first place then I think we can do it again but as I said, it's good for the team and not so good for my championship.

Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Sebastian, your team was one of the teams that suggested to come back to 2012 tyres and it looked like your car behaved very well today. Is there any relationship between these two facts?

SV: I think no. Whenever I opened my mouth, it was purely targeted at safety, because it can't be the case that we go out and we have a race like at Silverstone. I think in the end of the day, we step into the car, we want to race, race at the limit and we cannot drive into the unknown. All sorts of criteria I think was targeted at that and I think people forget that at the end of the day, you have to do your maths, you don't have to be a genius. We are leading the team championship and the Drivers' championship and if anything, we are the ones that have most to lose. Nevertheless, we pushed very hard, at least I did, from the drivers' point of view. I wasn't shy of communicating as well. I think we are happier overall - all the drivers - with the tyres we raced this weekend. Whether it suits your car or not is secondary.

Q: (Livio Oricchio - O Estado de Sao Paulo) And to Romain and Kimi, is the performance of your car also related to the new tyres?
RG: I think when we tested it in Canada - well, personally, I quite liked them. They were more proper racing tyres with the different rear belt so I was sort of happy that they brought them here. I think the compounds - medium and soft - were better than hard and medium normally, so I am looking forward to using the full new tyres from Budapest onwards that I understood a little bit better last year than this year. The fronts are a bit strange sometimes but as Sebastian said I think the main thing was to have a safety issue. We all remember Felipe Massa in 2009 and we don't want to see the same thing with a piece of tyre so we were glad and happy that Pirelli did something and well done to them because it wasn't easy.
KR: First of all, I don't think it's a 2012 tyre. The front tyre is exactly the same as all year. The rear belt is different but it's not the construction of 2012. We tried these tyres in Montreal and they were fine. It's not a very big difference to what we ran before so for us, I don't think it made any difference. They felt a little bit better tyre in Montreal. I think the biggest difference is on high downforce circuits but the weather is hot so that's probably what made the bigger difference for us.

Q: Heikki Kulta (Turun Sanomat) Sebastian, Kimi has been chasing you for victory quite a few times. What this the tightest of them all or was Bahrain last year even tighter?

SV: It was a different race. I think Bahrain was tighter because he was right behind for more than a couple of laps. Obviously I had Romain pushing very hard before Kimi pushed at the end of the stint, because he came through, past Romain and he was a little bit quicker at the end. Yeah, but both races, in terms of race pace, were very even and if the cars are nearly the same pace then it's very tricky and very difficult to overtake, so obviously if you're ahead, it's your advantage but I'm sure that one day it will be the other way round and I will probably hate it as much as Kimi does right now.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Sebastian, how confident are you about the next race because they will change the tyres again and they will be even more similar than 2012 tyres?

SV: First of all, I think we have to wait now. I think there's a test at Silverstone where race drivers are allowed to test and so we have a tyre test you can say, for at least a day and get a little bit more of an idea, and then I think Pirelli will make up their mind and decide to get together with the FIA - whether the teams like it or not, it doesn't matter. So I think at this point we don't know which tyres we are probably running in Hungary. The most important thing is that we learn the lesson from previous races, especially Silverstone, so for here, I think nothing happened which is good but it's good to have another proper look, especially around Silverstone and then decide for the remainder of the season.

Q: (Andrea Cremonesi - La Gazzetta dello Sport) Kimi, during the last laps, did you think about the opportunity of being with Red Bull and if that had an effect on your mood during the fight?

KR: Absolutely not. I try to win and it doesn't matter if it's a teammate or some other team. As long as we give ourselves a chance, I try to make it happen and obviously if there is a good chance to try to overtake I will try it but we never got that close so there was nothing to do really.

Q: (Oana Popoiu - F1Zone.Net) Romain, for the second race in a row, you were told you to let Kimi pass. Do you think you have any chance to fight for wins when you're ahead of Kimi?

RG: When the opportunity comes, yes. Today, as I said, we didn't put our eggs in the same basket and Kimi was quicker and might have gained on Sebastian but it didn't work. I think it was the right thing to do. It is important for a team to score points and try to get the win. Without the safety car it would have been a different story, but we all got together and that was it.

Q: (Jan Kotulla - Mannheimer Morgen) Sebastian, what about the support from the tribunes today?

SV: Yeah, it was great to receive so much support. I think it's unique for Germany to have a situation where the Grand Prix is coming and you have two drivers able to win the race. Obviously Michael was in a good position for many years so I think we are in a lucky position anyway, but I think it was exceptional this year with Nico winning in Monaco and at Silverstone last week. Yeah, I think it was great and nice to see, especially round turn seven where, for the second time around Nurburgring, there were a lot of people and guests and friends from Red Bull. They put a big banner up on the formation lap and also on the in lap so it was very special and I enjoyed every second, for sure, especially after the chequered flag.

Q: (Jan Kotulla - Mannheimer Morgen) And to all of you, have you see the movie Rush and what's your opinion about the movie?

SV: I haven't seen it. I went to bed, so sorry Niki, he was very kind and invited me. I thought it was smarter to go to bed. So I have to wait.

RG: I needed to sleep too so I went to bed as well.

KR: No.

F1 Germany Blog - Race report

An under pressure Sebastian Vettel won the German Grand Prix after an action-packed 60 laps that saw the defending world champion chased down by his likely future teammate.

Pole-sitter Lewis Hamilton lost out at the start, defending against a two-pronged attack from Vettel and Red Bull teammate Mark Webber that saw the Mercedes driver 'Zonta'ed into P3 in the approach to the first corner. Hamilton's attempts at defense cost Kimi Raikkonen the chance of moving up from his starting position, but the Finnish driver held back, avoided causing an incident, and waited to make his move.

Behind Vettel, who delivered a faultless performance in front of a devoted home crowd, the race results were impacted by teammates running in pairs, and - intentionally or otherwise - hindering each other's chances of taking the fight to the front.

After losing the lead before the first corner, Hamilton made an early pit stop on lap 6, emerging behind Nico Rosberg on fresh medium rubber. It would be the best part of eight laps before the Briton made it past his teammate, his tyres' peak performance lost in the wake of turbulence generated

by the man in the identical car.

Rosberg nipped into the pits shortly after being passed by Hamilton, having cost Mercedes an early opportunity to make up the positions lost at the start.

A near-identical situation took place between Lotus racers Raikkonen and Romain Grosjean in the closing stages of Sunday's race. While Grosjean had the advantage over Raikkonen in the first phase of the race, after the Safety Car it was clear that the Finn had more speed, his teammate having lost precious rubber during the five laps spent lapping behind Bernd Maylander.

But the Frenchman had the advantage in terms of track position, running in second with his teammate behind in third. The Lotus pair were keeping Vettel under pressure, with Grosjean 1.1 seconds behind the Red Bull, and Raikkonen 0.7 seconds further behind. The strategists on the Lotus pit wall gave Grosjean every opportunity to make his move on Vettel, and the Red Bull brains were paying attention.

When Grosjean dived into the pits on lap 40, Vettel covered the Frenchman a lap later, emerging ahead of the Lotus on track. Raikkonen was leading the race, but was certain to stop once more rather than risk losing a swathe of positions should his tyres fall off the cliff in the dramatic fashion that saw the Finn lose out in China in 2012.

As Vettel and Grosjean made their way back up to the head of the pack, Raikkonen and Alonso were leading the race. The Ferrari and Lotus entered the pits together at the end of lap 49, emerging behind Vettel and Grosjean. By lap 53, it was clear that Grosjean was not going to be able to make it past Vettel for the win, while Raikkonen – on tyres that were nine laps fresher – could be in with a chance of the win.

But Grosjean continued to battle on gamely until lap 55, when he was radioed by the team and asked not to hold up Raikkonen as he attempted to pass. The Frenchman obeyed the order, but it was too little too late – Raikkonen had lost his tyres' peak grip in Grosjean's dirty air, and needed at least one more lap to have a real chance of challenging Vettel for the win.

Mention should be made of Fernando Alonso, who made the most of Ferrari's bold strategy to end the race challenging for a podium despite having started the race in P8. Alonso ran a long(ish) first stint on the medium compound, and was running in P4 before the Safety Car came out and the pits filled with drivers seeking a 'free' tyre change. The Spanish racer then held position for much of the rest of the race, moving up the pack due to stops made ahead before switching to the softer compound on lap 49 with a view to making a last-gasp challenge for the podium. It was not to be, but Alonso nevertheless finished two seconds off the podium in a car that lacked the outright pace of Sunday's front runners.

2013 German Grand Prix results

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1h41m14.711s
2. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) + 1.008s
3. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 5.830s
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 7.721s
5. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) + 26.927s
6. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 27.996s
7. Mark Webber (Red Bull) +37.562s
8. Sergio Perez (McLaren) + 38.306s
9. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 46.821s
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) + 49.892s
11. Paul di Resta (Force India) + 53.771s
12. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) + 56.975s
13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) + 57.738s
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) + 1m0.160s
15. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) + 1m1.929s
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 1 lap
17. Charles Pic (Caterham) + 1 lap
18. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) + 1 lap
19. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 1 lap

Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) RET

Jules Bianchi (Marussia) RET

Felipe Massa (Ferrari) RET

F1 Germany Blog - Saturday press conference

It was a nail-biting qualifying session at the Nurburgring on Saturday afternoon, with some shock departures in the early stages. But at the end of the hour it was a set of familiar faces at the post-qualifying press conference.

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

Q: Lewis, you have some problems with the setup of the car this morning – quite a turnaround. How does it feel to come through and take pole position from such a long way back?

Lewis HAMILTON: I tell you, it's really overwhelming. I've been struggling since the first run in P1, which was pretty good, P2, P3 were just disasters and it got even worse this morning. We were miles off. I was a good eight-tenths of a second off. I wasn't comfortable with the car at all. And we went back into the truck and we just worked hard, tried to analyse everything and made lots and lots of changes. I just hoped that it would work and fortunately the car was beneath me and I was able to put in the times we did. I'm grateful for the work the guys did with me and, again, this is just

down to all the hard work the team has been putting in.

Q: Sebastian, you've never won on home soil. Tell us how much it means to you to do so tomorrow.

Sebastian VETTEL: Well, first of all I think we should talk about today. Congratulations to Lewis, he did a great job. I think it was quite close. I think I tried everything I had, the car felt fine. I think we were struggling a little bit this afternoon in the first sector, losing a little bit of time there and then trying to catch up. Unfortunately it wasn't enough but it looks like we are much closer to them here than we were in Silverstone. So, I think we've made some progress and have all confidence for tomorrow. We had a good run yesterday, looking at the race. I think we did our homework and now obviously it's up to us. We put the car in the first row. It wasn't quite enough for pole position but we should have a good race from there. I'm looking forward to the race tomorrow.

Q: Mark, you've got a great record around this place. Pole positions and wins. Again very close but where did it get away from you today?

Mark WEBBER: I'm not sure. I'm actually happy to be where I am. It's very, very sensitive out there as you can see. As Lewis touched on, the previous session he wasn't comfortable and then he finds some form. Similar for us. I think we might have lost a little bit in the first sector, as Seb touched on, it's very, very tricky for us to probably find the rhythm that we had there in P3 but that's the way it is. We know there was a shift in track temp and maybe it's pulled everyone together a little bit – at least on a short run. I think on long runs we're very happy with the car. We're in a good position to put pressure on for the victory tomorrow.

Q: Coming back to you Lewis, you've had a very long relationship, obviously, with Mercedes, going back to the very early days of your junior career. What does it mean to you today, to give them this pole position on home soil?

LH: Obviously it's a privilege to drive for this team. You know they've got great history, this is where Mercedes really started and so I've feel proud to get the pole for them – but obviously there's no points for today. Tomorrow's the important day. These guys are very good on their long runs. I hope that with my new setup it will be as good and I hope we can give them a run for their money.

Q: Okay gentleman, let's perhaps get into a little more detail about this afternoon's qualifying session. Lewis, we saw your teammate Nico Rosberg sitting in the garage at the end of Q2 when the fastest laps were being turned. Obviously, the track ramped up substantially during that Q2 session, showing again how fine the margins are between success and failure. Perhaps you can talk about the atmosphere, what was going on in the garage and your own thoughts at that point?

LH: Well, it was obviously a big surprise for all of us. Nico's been quick all weekend and I anticipated that he would most likely out-qualify me today and be up there where we are right now. Obviously he was only two tenths off the pace compared to my lap and obviously the track did ramp up and that was a real surprise and that caught us out a bit.

Q: Okay, Sebastian, as Mark touched on earlier, it was a day of things moving around a lot and the margins were very fine and sometimes there were literally hundredths of a seconds between the three of you as things swung around. What, for you, were the crucial details today. Was it the wind, was it the track temperature going up so much? What was it for you?

SV: I think it's a combination of all these aspects. I was very happy in FP3 this morning. I was very happy with the car, so we didn't change much. And this afternoon, I was struggling to bring it together, especially in the first part of the track, as Mark touched on, it was quite windy, we had wind from the back and the track was a little bit warmed. Still, the car wasn't bad; it wasn't awful through the first sector. So I was pretty happy but the time didn't come. And I tried to do the best I could in the next two sectors but it wasn't enough to get Lewis today.

Q: Mark perhaps you shed a little bit of light on... this is a one-off tyre specification we're going to be using this weekend – from Hungary onwards a completely new spec of tyres. What kind of race are you anticipating on this combination of tyres that have been brought here this weekend?

MW: I think the race tomorrow will be pretty aggressive. We got some good information on Friday as to how the tyres handle the conditions so I think it will be a pretty aggressive grand prix. Obviously Pirelli have made some changes from a safety perspective from the last grand prix, which was the right thing to do, otherwise we probably wouldn't be racing, so that's a good step from them. But also people have to understand... I think people get a little bit confused, that soft compounds don't make tyres explode, it's actually just the construction of the tyres, so when Pirelli are moving around some of their compound ranges it's not for a safety factor, it's actually just how the tyres are built. Going forward, as you said, they're going to make some more adjustments and we need to work on those in the future, but for tomorrow I think that the tyres will be pretty good. But you never know. You never count your chickens these days. Come Sunday you can have a lot of surprises and as usual we'll be legends tomorrow night on what we should have done better.

Q: Just for clarity, when you say aggressive you mean pushing flat out throughout the grand prix?

MW: Probably not that aggressive, you still need to keep a bit in margin but we'll find out tomorrow, as I say.

Q: (Simon Cass – The Daily Mail) As unlikely as it looks that there's going to be a problem with the tyres in the race, are you sticking by the announcement that you would withdraw if there is a problem or are you going to leave it in the hands of Charlie [Whiting] to decide tomorrow?

SV: I think it's pretty straightforward. I don't know where the question came from but... Yeah, I think it's pretty straightforward. Obviously when the race starts and... first of all, I'm confident that we won't have any problems but should we have any problems, then obviously it's difficult for us inside the car to judge that because we can't see and we can't know what's going on so Charlie is obviously the one who is deciding and I think we had a good chat with him on Thursday night so he's aware of the situation. I think we were very close at Silverstone to have a red flag but obviously it was new to everybody including the race direction so I think we obviously learned our lesson and should be well prepared for tomorrow. But again, I don't expect any difficulties.

Q: Just for clarity, how would the senior drivers communicate with him? Do you have a link with him via radio or do you have to go via the team? How would it happen?

SV: Charlie can hear us when we are talking on the radio. It's not the first time he's listening to us. I think if we had races in the wet, if whatever was going on, he's obviously aware and listening to all the drivers.

Q: (Vincent Marre – Sport Zeitung) Sebastian, which of the two drivers who are sitting on your left do you fear the most: Lewis Hamilton winning with Mercedes here in Germany or Mark Webber, leaving at the end of the season?

SV: It's difficult to hear. I'm not sure I got everything but who do I fear the most? I think that was the question. I'm looking forward to the race tomorrow. I'm not really focusing on just Lewis or just Mark. I think Lewis is ahead of us, Mark is right behind and then we go from there. Obviously I focus on the start, focus on the lights and then we will see where we are in the first corner. After that we have sixty laps, it's a long Grand Prix, a lot of things can happen here so I don't think the race gets decided straight away so really looking after myself first of all and then obviously the target is to win tomorrow.

Q: (Oana Popoiu - FlZone.net) Sebastian, you used to win races starting from pole position; how difficult is it this year when Mercedes are faster in qualifying?

SV: I think generally you don't have to start from pole position to win races. It helps, because obviously it's the best position to start from but I think we had good races also from other positions and as I just said, the race is long, there are a lot of things that can happen so we focus on the start, go from there. In terms of strategy, I think we have a rough idea, it all depends on tyres and tyre wear. I think there might be a lot of things happening tomorrow. I think Ferrari decided to start on the medium, on the harder compound so we will see tomorrow.

Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) Lewis and Mark, you've both won on this track. According to you, which is the most difficult part of the track and how do you deal with it?

LH: It's a fantastic circuit, one of the classics and it hasn't lost that feel of an old classic circuit. There's not one particular part of the track that's harder than the other. It's a very fast, flowing circuit. As you can see, the Red Bulls seem to be quite quick from the middle... in the last sector. I was able to be a little bit quicker in the first sector. It's really being quite accurate with the lines that you choose and trying to keep up. You need the downforce to keep up the minimum speed through the corners. I don't think there's one particular place that's harder than any others.

MW: I think it is a classic circuit, still a bit of an old school track, particularly the middle sector. Even things like the kerbs, they're quite nice, they're the old-style kerbs. I said to Charlie that we should put some of these kerbs actually in some new circuits because it's self-policing on the exit. We don't have this astro-turf rubbish, we have... It's a beautiful little circuit for us to still drive on so I think all the guys enjoy driving here. Also the undulations are quite nice: climbing in a Formula One car and having the different speed range but the entries are the most important. You have to be very accurate on the way in to these corners, so I think that's important. The first sector is quite wide, the second sector is quite narrow, so accuracy and line is probably a little bit more... a sniff more important than maybe some other tracks where we have a bit more scope for line.

F1 Germany Blog - Saturday report

Saturday morning in the Nurburgring was glorious, with sunny skies and warm track temperatures that provided ideal conditions for a Red Bull domination of FP3. And while Sebastian Vettel's first July win is still in the future, the defending world champion was seven-tenths clear of the opposition by the end of the morning practice session.

As has been the case all weekend, FP3 saw nothing in the way of driver incidents, although Pastor Maldonado provided a brief moment of drama for the Williams pit wall when he did his usual trick of running wide and triggering a few grey hairs. There was some pre-session drama for the team when a KERS failure on Maldonado's car led to a small fire that was quickly contained.

The afternoon continued bright and sunny, and when the pitlane opened for qualifying the air temperature was 23 degrees and the track temperature was 36 degrees. It was a calm start to Q1, with a few minutes of silence before the cars started pouring onto the track.

Half-way through the session it was Daniel Ricciardo who topped the timesheets for Toro Rosso with a 1m31.081s lap that put him ahead of Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton. In P4 was Jean-Eric Vergne, completing the unexpected Toro Rosso-Mercedes sandwich.

But Ricciardo's time at the top would not last, and the Australian was soon dethroned by Fernando Alonso and Kimi Raikkonen, both of whom lapped in the 1m30s.

Jenson Button was the last driver to set a timed lap, crossing the line in a P6-worthy 1m31.181s with just over two minutes remaining. As the chequered flag drew near, the dropout zone was comprised of the usual driver pairings from Marussia and Caterham plus Sergio Perez and Valtteri Bottas, both of whom were out on track trying to improve.

With thirty seconds remaining, Felipe Massa set the benchmark time of 1m30.547s, heading a tightly packed list that saw a mere eight-tenths covering the gap between P4 and P17. Perez saved himself shortly before the flag fell, leaving the Williams drivers fighting to make Q2.

But the fight came to naught, and Q2 got underway without Bottas or Maldonado in contention. The Saubers and Toro Rossos were first out on track, while Raikkonen set the benchmark of 1m30.575s on his first timed lap, seven-tenths ahead of the Force India of Paul di Resta.

With Button, Webber, and Vettel yet to complete timed laps, the middle of Q2 saw the dropout zone comprised of those three plus Esteban Gutierrez, Adrian Sutil, Ricciardo, and Perez. Button's first timed effort saw the Briton in P10, certain to return to the dropout zone when the Red Bulls crossed the line.

As expected, Vettel took top honours when crossing the line, with Webber in P3 behind Hamilton. Gutierrez pulled himself out of the dropout zone and into P8, leaving Vergne, Hulkenberg, Button, Sutil, Ricciardo, and Perez fighting for Q3 survival.

Alonso took the top spot with one minute remaining, before being dethroned by Massa. The final minute was tense, with Raikkonen saving himself from the dropout zone after the chequered flag fell, and Rosberg knocked out in Q2 while sitting in the pits. Left to fight it out in Q3 were the driver pairings from Ferrari, Lotus, and Red Bull, plus Button, Hamilton, Hulkenberg, and Ricciardo.

Ricciardo was on fire in the opening minutes of Q3, setting purple sector after purple sector before returning to the pits without a lap time to his name. Raikkonen was the first driver to set a representative time, but the Finn was eclipsed by Vettel who was in turn beaten by Hamilton, who claimed provisional pole with a 1m29.540s lap.

But the gap between Hamilton and Vettel measured just shy of a tenth, and both drivers returned to the pits with time remaining in which to run again.

Button joined Ricciardo in failing to complete a timed lap, while Hulkenberg did not go out at all until there less than two minutes remaining. Ferrari were also late to send their drivers out, and put both Massa and Alonso on mediums for their one-shot runs.

Vettel took provisional pole from Hamilton by a few thousandths, and the Briton responded by shaving an extra tenth off the Red Bull driver's time, claiming a home pole position for Mercedes.

Provisional grid

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m29.398s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m29.501s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m29.608
4. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m29.892s
5. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m29.959s
6. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m30.528s
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m31.126s
8. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m31.209s
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) NO TIME SET
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) NO TIME SET

11. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m30.326
12. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m30.697s
13. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m30.933s
14. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m31.010s
15. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m31.010s
16. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m31.104s

17. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m31.693s
18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m31.707s
19. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m32.937s
20. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m33.063s
21. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m33.734s
22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m34.098s

F1 Germany Blog - Friday press conference

For the first time in three consecutive summonings, Pirelli motorsport director Paul Hembery attended the FIA Friday press conference for senior paddock figures. Unsurprisingly, tyre talk was the order of the day.

Present were Pat Fry (Ferrari), Paul Hembery (Pirelli), Paddy Lowe (Mercedes), Tom McCullough (Sauber), and Sam Michael (McLaren).

Q: Paul, can I start with you, and welcome back. Can we recap? We saw what happened at Silverstone, we know the changes that have been introduced with the tyres. Logistically, how big a challenge has that been for Pirelli? Also, tell us the reasoning behind the changes here and at future races this season?

Paul HEMBERY: Just to recap, at Silverstone we'd underestimated the impact of swapping the tyres. The cars were two, maybe three seconds quicker this year. Whilst we'd allowed the teams to do that, we'd underestimated the impact on the tyre. When you swap them around that creates a point with the metallic belt that we have on it, on the left-hand side, the camber side, and that created the weakness. We got that wrong and we needed to get it right going forward. So making changes, coming here the metallic belt has changed to an aramid belt, which is something the teams tested briefly in Canada. And going forward further again, we'll introduce the 2012 structure with this year's compounds for subsequent races. Logistically, yes, very, very tough. Obviously back-to-back races and our team in Izmit in Turkey have performed a few miracles, working flat out, as you can imagine, to get here, ready to race this weekend.

Q: Can you put a figure on the amount of tyres you've had to produce in the 48 hours?

PH: I think it was about 1000, something like that. We had a few maybe in stock but we had to produce them. But they work very well and we have to give a lot of credit to them.

Q: Pat, a difficult morning for you and one half of the garage at Ferrari. What was the problem with Fernando's car and how much did you lose by the lack running?

Pat FRY: Well, I think every time your car doesn't get out on the track you lose out really. We had a reasonably full aero programme that we effectively had to give up on. We did a little in the afternoon but nowhere near as much as we wanted to. It's just one of those silly little electrical problems. It takes you a while to work what's wrong and by the time you do it just takes too long to sort out.

Q: Do you feel Ferrari have lost performance with recent developments and upgrades and if so how easy it to fix that decline?

PF: It is a development race all through the year isn't it. We've brought some good upgrades and there's some that have been a little bit more temperamental that we're trying to understand. So again you would have seen there were different specs of car running here again in each side of the garage in the morning and in the afternoon.

Q: Tom, if we can turn to you. Silverstone was your third points finish of the season. It's a vastly different situation at Sauber to

last year. What exactly is the problem?

Tom McCULLOUGH: Well obviously last year we started the year very strongly, scored a lot of points at the start of the season and moving to the end of the year we weren't quite as competitive on a regular basis. The start of this season has moved us a couple of positions in the team ranking from a competitiveness point of view and that very quickly drops you out of the points. So as opposed to fighting in the points, you're just dropping out of the points. We're working very hard with the car to improve it to try to get back into the points-scoring positions on a more regular basis.

Q: As a member of the engineering department, how restricted are you by resources as you try to develop the car to make it go faster?

TM: You always have to work within your budgets, from a technical point of view, where you're pushing very hard on the correlation side to understand the car as well as we can do. We have an update package coming for the next race, which we'll be evaluating at the next test. So we're still pushing very hard and obviously the more you can push the better.

Q: Sam, McLaren's problems have been well documented this season. As it stands at the moment, how much of your resources are focused on the 2013 car compared with next year's 2014 project?

Sam MICHAEL: Well the 2014 car has been in development for a good nine or 12 months now. As with all teams, you're just balancing up how much resource you put on that versus this year. We're still developing this year's car: we still have parts coming for it. We'll definitely do that until the shutdown – which is only three weeks away. I think once we get back we'll see what the competitiveness is like around sort of Monza, Spa, Singapore and then make a call on how long we keep pushing on that. At the moment we're working on both cars. There's still a lot of things... although the actual components wouldn't directly carry over, the understanding of the flow mechanisms around the car is still valuable.

Q: So if results improve, it's worth persisting with this year's car. If they don't, by the time we get to Singapore, is that where you say 'no, we're going to switch the focus to 2014', a season Martin Whitmarsh, your team principal, has already said is a very important season.

SM: Probably, you would... it's probably going to be based on those factors. You'll be looking at correlation, seeing if the parts you bring, over those two or three races post-shutdown work, and work strongly, and start giving you results you might continue. But it depends how much carries over. Probably the piece that carries over the least is the exhaust because it's so different to next year and not relevant. Most of the other parts, as I said, even if they're... of course they won't be the same bits of carbon but the actual academic studies that you're doing in the company are still valid.

Q: Finally, Paddy, your first Friday press conference as Mercedes' Executive Director Technical.

Paddy LOWE: Thank you very much.

Q: Good to see you here.

PL: It's good to be back.

Q: Lovely to see you in the paddock. How do you fit into the existing structure, into the technical director structure at Mercedes? What are your day-to-day responsibilities?

PL: Well, I've only just arrived, as you know. At the moment I'm just trying to find my feet and get to know the company. A lot of people to get to know – get to know how they work. I'll be supporting Ross and Toto and also the technical team – Bob, Aldo and Geoff. At the moment I'm looking all around, seeing how I can help.

Q: Have you cast a fresh pair of eyes over the 2013 car and identified areas where improvements can be made?

PL: Yeah, I'm looking at the very short term as well as into next year and how the organisation is structured as well. So, wherever I can help immediately, I am. But there's no particular focus.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action / National Speedsport News) To the four team guys, was there ever a point during the race at Silverstone when you considered withdrawing your cars – and reasons for leaving them in.

TM: From our side we monitored the data very closely during the race. We knew the operating limits we were working within, and how we were using the tyres. We speak quite closely with our Pirelli engineer and he was giving us some feedback as well. So, from our side, everything was good.

Q: Sam?

SM: Yes, it was discussed on our pitwall. It was more a discussion focussed around what we thought the FIA may do or may not do, rather than us actually making a decision to pull McLaren cars out by themselves. It was more a discussion about what we should do in between that time. Just in case that happened.

Q: What was the discussion at Ferrari Pat?

PF: I think in that type of situation it's always tricky and you've got to try to work out the best way to contain it. Silverstone is now the highest loaded circuit that we go to – it obviously used to be Indianapolis – and the type of failure, if you see it, was likely to be structural fatigue failure. So the first thing you do is look at where people were getting to. I think Lewis broke on lap nine or eight, we failed on lap 10, someone got to lap 14. So instantly we were thinking 'well, you've got to minimise stint length.' We were advised by Pirelli to increase the pressures, which we did, and you try as much as you can to contain that situation. So I think from around the first round of tyre failures, we were always going to three-stop because that was a less risky way. To try and two-stop from there you would be well past the mileage that the tyres were obviously failing at. We tried to contain it that way. And then obviously, after the second failures, there was another request to go up on the pressures again – and you can see our pace drop off as we increased the tyre pressures.

Q: But not a thought of pulling out?

PF: I think we were thinking of how we could contain it and make it as safe as we could rather than pulling out. There was some conversation with the FIA on the intercom about the tyre pressures we were running behind the safety car but in the end we just have to manage it.

Q: And finally Paddy?

PL: Very similar to Pat's reply. We were keeping a close eye on what the FIA might do in terms of a decision but for our point of view it was more a matter of management. Whether through pressure or instructions to the driver about certain corners and kerbs and so on.

Q: (Kate Walker – GP Week) We learnt last night that the GPDA members have considered withdrawing from this race. I was wondering what discussions you'd had from your drivers about potential withdrawals and how you felt about that?

PL: It's not something we go involved in, no.

Q: Pat?

PF: I haven't discussed it with either of the drivers. We've obviously gone through the changes here, why we think things will be an improvement but we've left it at that.

Q: Sam?

SM: No, it's not something we discussed with the drivers. They came back from the GPDA meeting and said that they'd made that decision. We respect that. Both of our drivers, and I'm sure the rest, are fully aware of the changes and investigations that Pirelli have done over the last four or five days. It has been a pretty monumental effort to get the tyres that they've got here. I fully appreciate that. Had a lot of conversations with Pirelli directly and we're happy with the direction and changes that they're making. Both of our drivers are fully aware of that and understand it. At the same time you can kind of understand their concern: they just don't want a repeat of the last race. So we respect them because of that.

Q: Tom?

TM: Similar really to what Sam was saying. We went through all the technical changes that have been done and the operating limits that have been recommended by Pirelli and the drivers were pretty confident that things would be OK.

Q: (Pierre Van Vliet – Fli.com) Question for Paul. I understand that on top of the young driver days in Silverstone, Pirelli is planning some more tests – a private test in Paul Ricard next week or Barcelona at the end of the month. Is that true – and which teams are going to be involved?

PH: The young drivers' test, we're taking along some of the tyres that are going to... the structure of the tyre that will be used going forward this season. Five sets. The Paul Ricard and Barcelona tests are with the 2010 Renault and it's our own testing that's looking forward for a few things for next season. Obviously it's a little bit slow now compared to the way the cars are moving.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) Paul, your press release on Tuesday stated that there was no safety issue if the tyres were used as intended. You also clarified that turning them around... the effect of that, the lower pressures – all that's been corrected. As a result of that, on what basis have the specifications actually been changed on the grounds of safety, because that's the only way the rule change could be pushed through? Could you clarify that, please?

PH: Well, you've seen at Silverstone a very dramatic increase in performance, compared to previous years and for some teams, they described it as a three fold increase in loading on the tyres, so going forward, you learn from those situations, obviously, and you want to give a greater margin, so it's purely that.

Q: So it's a precautionary tactic, as it were, a precautionary measure that you need to take.

PH: Well, yeah. The rate of development in Formula One is vast. You've also got a moving target. You don't need two signals like that, do you?

Q: (Walter Koster – Saabrucker Zeitung) Mr Hembery, after all these tyre dramas at the beginning of the season, are you still able to sleep well, or do you have nightmares? And do you fear that Mr Jean Todt could perhaps have the intention to bring his French friends back into Formula One with Michelin?

PH: Well, I don't have nightmares fortunately. We do work a lot. I think everyone in Formula One, these people here, will tell you that no matter what job you have in Formula One it's very intensive so that's not an issue. I have to say that Jean Todt and the FIA were extremely supportive. Actually we were talking, before Sunday, about a number of issues going forward and I could only say that we thank the FIA for their great support, including Charlie Whiting as well, over the last week. I think that all I can say is what I see and that's a very co-operative and very supportive FIA.

Q: (Oana Popoiu – FlZone.net) Sam, Jenson said yesterday that it's the development of this car that will help you next year. If McLaren don't manage to fix this car, how will that negatively affect next year's car?

SM: I think it goes back to the intro question that David asked. All the work we do on this year's car and any investigative work, whether it gets good correlation or not, is still valid for the 2014 car because you're trying different things to understand... you can clearly measure where you have deficiencies and when you try and do changes for the track, whether you measure them here during Friday testing that we do or any future Grand Prix Fridays. When you get those components and then you feed that information back to the design office and wind tunnel, that loop that you close generates information, whether the test was positive or negative, so that's how it will feed into next year.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and National Speedsport News) Pat and maybe Paul, the minimum tyre pressures have gone up, I believe, when leaving the pits by only one pound. How can one pound make that much difference? When we look at a road car it doesn't make much difference at all.

PF: In terms of car balance, we obviously do play around with pressures, change of balance from qualifying to the race. It's a standard tool that everyone uses. And also the higher pressures... you can worsen your long run by increasing your rear pressures. It's a tool; as long as everyone is working to the same limits it's fine. There is a tendency, if you've got an oversteering car, to try and run the pressures as low as you can at the rear or higher at the front. That's just a normal way you chase a car balance.

Q: (Dan Knutson – Auto Action and National Speedsport News) From a safety point of view, why is it much better to have...?

PF: Well, I think maybe that's a question for Paul.

PH: Well, you've got to have a starting point and it's what happens as well as the pressures grow which is also important. Another thing we were conscious of as well after Silverstone is the safety car period which was extended. Normally that's not a great issue because you don't drop too low but when you're at a circuit like Silverstone, if you restart and you've dropped down below almost the starting pressures, then that can create other issues, so that's something else that we're studying at the moment. Road cars, well I don't think people check their pressures too much on road cars, sadly, which is why the European Union I believe have introduced new digital measurements on new cars going forward for pressures. It's still very important: whichever car you're driving, you need to check your pressures.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – The Citizen) Primarily for Pat and Paddy; the 2012 spec tyres have got a different shape to the 2013 tyres. That shape is being introduced from Hungary. What aerodynamic effect do you believe this will have on your cars?

PF: Obviously the shape of the tyre is critical to the aerodynamics around the front wing and around the diffuser. We just need to re-optimize in those two areas. Obviously we have the wind tunnel tyres for both so we need to get in and start comparing and seeing what adjustments are needed. It's impossible to say if it's going to benefit one car more than another. I don't know. I guess we'll find out in Hungary.

PL: Yeah, there are differences but we're aware of those differences because it's a tyre, obviously, that we used and developed around last year, so we can look at that when that's been finally confirmed and optimize the car around that.

Q: Could it be a benefit to either McLaren or Sauber?

SM: I don't think so but I don't know to be honest. I don't think anyone really knows. Probably the best comparison is that we've all done that test in Brazil, Friday, last year when we compared 2012 casing to 2013 and the changes were not significant so that's the only piece of data we've got. As Pat said, we've also got all the wind tunnel tyres and things like that. The main thing is that the changes are being done for safety so it's second order what effect it has on the performance.

TMCC: Nothing really much more to add. As Sam was saying, safety's really the most important thing, whether it increases or reduces the performance of our car we shall see once we get out on the track.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Paul, there are no guarantees in anything but what degree of certainty can you say that the tyres you have here and the tyres that you will have from Hungary onwards are safe?

PH: Well, we wouldn't be racing if we didn't feel they were safe. You go into every race with the best information that you have and you wouldn't come to any race if you had any doubts.

Q: (Kate Walker - GP Week) We've heard this week that the possibility of a late season tyre test after Interlagos for 2014 has been mooted. How do you feel about that, will that be beneficial, given all of the spec changes we've got between the next year?

TMCC: I understood that test was now not even going to happen. Potentially we will be testing some tyres during the free practice session at Brazil but maybe Paul knows more about that.

PH: Practice isn't viable because it's so limited in running. You can maybe run one spec. The intention was to run a far more detailed, proper tyre test programme. We need to have a re-think on that one and find another way. Brazil would be ideal because it would be a good circuit for us to run some testing, because of the nature of the circuit, end of season as well, we'll be getting closer to what we want to be using for next season.

Q: Sam, would that be what you would be looking for as well, a tyre test in Brazil?

SM: One thing I do agree with with Paul is that Brazil is a good track for outing problems on the opposite side, obviously, to what we had at Silverstone. So McLaren will support whatever Pirelli wants to do. I do believe you can do quite a lot on Fridays as well but obviously not as much as if you concentrate fully on a one or two day test afterwards.

PL: For us the most important thing is safety and the integrity of the tyre so we're working as closely as we can with Pirelli and their engineers and the FIA to help guide the process to deliver that result. Whether that needs a test at a particular place is another matter to be determined but I think the important thing at the moment is for the engineers to work behind the scenes and make sure that the right analysis is done to feed the process.

Q: Beneficial to Ferrari to have the test?

PF: Well, I think the test was discussed yesterday in the SWG and I thought that the conclusion was not Brazil but they were going to try and find another solution. That's as much as I know.

Q: So Paul, if it's not Brazil and it's not FPI in Brazil, is there time for another solution?

PH: We need to have another chat, a more serious chat. We need to find, in more detail, what we need to do. For us, tyre testing is 14/18 specifications, 600 kilometers a day. You obviously can't do that on a Friday. We need to find a way of running this season with something more representative than the 2010 car. Equally, going forward, what happens when the new cars are actually going out? There's certainly a need to go wet testing in our opinion, we believe. Probably the teams might be interested in doing that as well seeing that half the year we seem to be racing in the rain. The new power plants, we understand, will have a dramatic impact next year and certainly wet conditions is something that we need to think about running an all team test before we actually get to Malaysia.

Q: (Oana Popoiu - F1Zone.net) Pat, how many times during a weekend do you change the strategy? And how much of that relies on your car's performance and how much on your competitors?

PF: Well, you go in with a rough plan of where you are. There's been quite a few races this year which have been on the borderline of either three to four or two to three (pit stops). I think you have a plan but then it's a case of looking at everyone's relatively pace, tyre degradation, how our tyres are doing. It's constantly being updated really. It's all done live and in simulation-land.

Q: Do you prefer it that way. Is it a bit more exciting where you're having to change plans every few laps?

PF: I think it is down to knowing exactly what the tyres are doing and how you are relative to your competitors. You will be a very clever person if you manage to sort that all out in your first simulation, to be honest.

Q: (Ian Parkes - Press Association) Paul, you've touched on the difficulties of testing going into next season; how deep is the concern inside Pirelli that you won't have enough testing going into 2014 and will encounter problems like we've seen this year?

PH: Well, the good thing is that we're now talking in a lot more detail and that will carry on over the next few weeks. We feel that there is a need to do some level of testing with representative cars. You can imagine that there could be some surprises again next season and maybe there will need to be some check on balance done then as well. But at the moment, there isn't a clear indication of what we should do and we hope and judging by the discussions we've had there is a willingness to look at solutions that work for everybody, for the sport and for Pirelli.

F1 Germany Blog - Friday report

While FPI is typically characterised by a lack of running in the opening half hour, Friday morning at the Nurburgring was another matter entirely.

Thanks to the exploding tyre fiasco that was last weekend's British Grand Prix at Silverstone, and the revised tyres supplied by Pirelli for the German race, track time was vital to determine whether any similar problems were in store for the weekend ahead.

Prior to the session starting, the FIA established a set of parameters for tyre use throughout the weekend, including a ban on switching tyres to run on the opposite side of the car to that which had been intended in construction.

Early on in the morning Fernando Alonso was sidelined with an electrical issue that saw the Ferrari driver stop out on track. After around forty minutes of work in the garage, Alonso returned to the circuit, only to be beset with an identical problem. As a consequence, the Spanish racer was unable to set a time during FPI.

Mercedes dominated what was a peaceful morning free from any incidents worth noting. Lewis Hamilton topped the timesheets for the Silver Arrows at the historic venue where the marque made their motorsport debut decades earlier, followed closely by teammate Nico Rosberg.

Hamilton was more than a second faster than Mark Webber in P3, whose best lap was eight-tenths slower than the time set by Rosberg. Behind the leading pair, seven-tenths of a second covered P3 to P11.

The second practice session saw changes to the timesheets, with Sebastian Vettel claiming top honours as Lewis Hamilton inexplicably lost pace, but the bulk of FP2 was given over to longer high fuel runs, as is traditional. As is equally traditional, Red Bull, Lotus, and Ferrari maintained consistent lap times over the length of their runs, while Mercedes showed demonstrably less pace on their long runs.

Rosberg ended the afternoon in second place on the timesheets, two-tenths shy of Vettel, and was chased by Webber and the Lotus pairing of Romain Grosjean and Kimi Raikkonen, with the Frenchman out-pacing his teammate.

Further down the grid in the incident-free session were problems for Jules Bianchi, who was forced to call his afternoon short due to illness. The Frenchman missed out on running in FPI, having given over his car to Rodolfo Gonzalez, and it is hoped he will be fit to return to the cockpit in time for FP3 tomorrow morning.

When the chequered flag fell to mark the end of Friday's running, an audible sigh of relief was heaved the length of the paddock, not least in the Pirelli motorhome. Not only had FPI and FP2 both been free from on-track incidents, but the tyres had performed exactly as expected, with no delaminations or failures to worry about.

FPI times

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m31.754s [25 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m31.973s [25 laps]
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m32.789s [22 laps]
4. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m32.822s [16 laps]
5. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m32.956s [22 laps]
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m33.065s [18 laps]
7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m33.139s [24 laps]
8. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m33.213s [20 laps]
9. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m33.260s [27 laps]
10. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m33.456s [18 laps]
11. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m33.493s [18 laps]
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m33.810s [20 laps]
13. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m33.901s [23 laps]
14. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m33.976s [26 laps]
15. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m34.025s [20 laps]
16. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m34.200s [22 laps]
17. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m34.437s [24 laps]
18. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m35.674s [23 laps]
19. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m35.987s [19 laps]
20. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m36.078s [23 laps]
21. Rodolfo Gonzalez (Marussia) 1m37.459s [21 laps]
22. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) NO TIME SET [2 laps]

FP2 times

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m30.416s [39 laps]
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m30.651s [38 laps]
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1m30.683s [41 laps]
4. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m30.843s [32 laps]
5. Kimi Raikkonen (Lotus) 1m30.848s [27 laps]
6. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m31.056s [39 laps]
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1m31.059s [41 laps]
8. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m31.304s [35 laps]
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m31.568s [37 laps]
10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1m31.797s [40 laps]
11. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1m31.824s [34 laps]
12. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1m31.855s [42 laps]
13. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m32.055s [39 laps]
14. Sergio Perez (McLaren) 1m32.086s [36 laps]
15. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 1m32.495s [39 laps]
16. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m32.762s [44 laps]

17. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m32.879s [35 laps]
 18. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1m32.880s [36 laps]
 19. Charles Pic (Caterham) 1m33.695s [38 laps]
 20. Giedo van der Garde (Caterham) 1m33.804s [40 laps]
 21. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m34.017s [10 laps]
 22. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m34.667s [39 laps]
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F1 Germany Blog - Thursday press conference

It was nearly an all-German affair at the drivers' press conference in the Nurburgring paddock on Thursday afternoon.

Present were Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber), Sergio Perez (McLaren), Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), Adrian Sutil (Force India), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Good afternoon to all six of you. Not much time between the last race and this – Silverstone still very much fresh in our minds. I think all six of you had a very eventful race in Britain. So let's start off with your thoughts on the race in Silverstone and the afternoon you had there. I guess we should start with Nico Rosberg, as you won.

Nico ROSBERG: I had a good afternoon! It was a very good race weekend in general and I'm really to come out with that result at the end. To have a fast car in the race as well, which has been our weakness in recent weeks and months. So to have improved there was great. And home grand prix for the team, so to win there was absolutely fantastic.

Q: Yourself, Sebastian – contrasting experiences.

Sebastian VETTEL: I think we had a solid weekend. We were able to qualify well right behind the Mercedes, which was I think the best we could do on Saturday. But on Sunday we had good pace in the race. Obviously, it's difficult to know as Lewis had a tyre failure very early on but I think we could have matched him in terms of race pace. But after that, quite frustrating to lose the lead due to a technical problem, but as I said after the race these things happen. So I think we've understood the problem, fixed the problem, so we move on.

Q: Sergio, what about you, what stands out for you from your race at Silverstone?

Sergio PEREZ: Tyres I think. I think the race itself was better than expected. We had better race pace and in the race itself it was a good strategy and so on. We were able to do better than expected but then with the safety cars it got us in the wrong place and towards the end I didn't have good tyres and the people behind were coming a bit quicker and then I had the explosion with the tyre.

Q: Adrian, your race?

Adrian SUTIL: Yeah, exciting race, interesting race. I would say the pace was not generally as good as expected, so I had to always look more in the mirror and try to make myself as wide as possible and protect my position. I had a very good start. I was running fourth for a long time and then third after the re-start after the second safety car. It looked close to a podium but still our car was just not fast enough and maybe it was a bit unlucky the second safety car period but nevertheless I think there was a chance, a small little chance, to get on the podium, if after the re-start something else would have happened. We risked it and stayed out and then of course a lot of cars with better tyres were behind and I lost quite a few positions very quickly. But seventh in the end was some good points for the team, we stabilised our position and we're fifth in the Constructors' World Championship and that's very important for us.

Q: What about you Daniel, just finishing behind Adrian in eighth place after that career-best fifth?

Daniel RICCIARDO: It seemed for the last half of the race we were tied together for a little bit. The safety at the end was a bit of a lottery I guess. We were in fourth at the time behind the safety car and obviously fourth is a great position at the time, for us, for the team. Whether we pitted or not, I guess it was a bit of a gamble at the time, whatever we chose to do, and obviously we stayed out and lost out because of it. But I think the weekend as a whole went really well, from Friday through to Sunday we were always in the top 10, always strong. I think our race pace was good as well. It's positive for us. It would have been nice to get a few more points and I'm sure we'll get another opportunity.

Q: Finally, Nico Hulkenberg. At the back a chaotic race at times but one that eventually brought you your second points finish of the season.

Nico HULKENBERG: Yeah, happy to get away with a point after quite a long dry period. It was a good feeling for me and the team to have a point. Overall, quite an exciting race with lots of wheel-to-wheel action. So it was a lot of fun from inside the car. Fortunately, I wasn't one of the guys who had the tyre problems.

Q: So this weekend here: it's the first German Grand Prix here at the Nurburgring for you in your third season in F1, which surprised me when I read that. Does it add to the excitement, racing in front of your home fans, a new track in an F1 car?

NH: Yeah, it does. A lot of excitement. I had done the practice one session in 2011 in a Force India but it is the first proper race attempt. The Nurburgring has always been very kind to me. I've had lots of good finishes here, won a lot of races and have done many laps here. I really like the place, obviously a lot of history on this circuit and the Nordschleife, so I'm really looking forward to this weekend.

Q: Racing in front of your home fans at a track you know well – how much does that help you and how much does it raise the goals that you and Sauber might have for this weekend?

NH: Maybe there is a bit of extra motivation but you have to be realistic with what we have. But I'll try everything to make it a good weekend for us and I'll just look forward and try to enjoy it as much as I can.

Q: Sebastian happy birthday for this week. Probably the only thing you celebrate in July given that you've not won in front of your home fans in Formula One. You haven't won in July either – which seems a strange one.

SV: I think it was much more important what we have achieved the last four years and the last three years in particular. So, yeah, I think we've have good races in the past here but also in Hockenheim. So in Germany in general. Was always close but not good enough to win yet – but I hope I have a little bit of time left to try again. We definitely try this weekend.

Q: As the defending World Champion you race with a lot of focus on you week after week. How much does that intensify when you come to a German Grand Prix in front of your home fans?

SV: Well surely it's special. As the other drivers... as Nico just touched on, I think we've done a lot of racing here before our time in Formula One so we know the circuit well. Obviously it's great to come back and especially the last couple of years with more and more people supporting the team, supporting myself. It's great to come back and really get a feeling of a true home grand prix. So, I'm looking forward to this weekend, looking forward to the support from the fans and yeah, hopefully see more and more Red Bull flags around the track.

Q: Daniel, to you next, happy birthday to you this week as well. Don't know what you got for a birthday present but I'm sure the one you're really looking for is to be Sebastian's team-mate for next year. That would surely be the best present of all - wouldn't it?

DR: Yeah, I guess so. Birthday present... that was Monday, that was my birthday, after the race. So, I was just coming down from the weekend really. Had a bit of birthday cake, not too much, of course. Obviously talk about next year was pretty frequent last weekend. For me, just keep trying to do what I'm doing, keep pushing and... yeah... it's nice to hear some positive things. Definitely. It would be a great position to be in but I've still got a bit of work ahead of me. Silverstone went well. I think that didn't hinder anything. I've got to keep doing that.

Q: Is that all you can do? Just keep doing what you're doing? You've not set yourself new goals, new targets to attract the attention of those that might make the decision?

DR: Well, I definitely try... I haven't won a race yet so definitely I've still got some further goals and ambitions so I'll keep striving for better things. But realistically to do the best I can. I think the qualifying on Saturday was good and the race, as I've said, it could have easily been better but we still got points and showed a consistent pace throughout the weekend, the whole three days, so that was important. Definitely some positive things from that and happy to keep it going now.

Q: Sergio, we come to your ninth race as a McLaren driver. What positives do you take out of the first eight races?

SP: It's been a very difficult season for us, for McLaren. Big struggle. Since the start of the season I think we have made some progress. First of all in understanding the car, get the correlation right. But to be honest I don't expect a major difference this weekend to where we were in Silverstone. I think we will be in a similar position, trying to fight to get into the points. And I hope we can score good points here because in Silverstone we should have scored points, so definitely here I aim for some points as well.

Q: Do you think you're driving better now, as a McLaren driver, than in the first couple of races for your new team?

SP: Yes, of course. The understanding of the car is getting better, the knowledge with the team. Sometimes people don't realise when you change teams, how difficult it is to adapt to the different style of the car, different ways of approaching setting up the car. It takes a couple of races - it took me a couple of races - but I think right now I'm really in good shape. Together with my team we have done good progress so I definitely thing from now on, for the rest of the season, we can keep taking the maximum out of the car.

Q: Adrian. Consistency. That seems to be what you and Force India have found. The last three races you've scored points, your team-mate Paul di Resta has scored points and you seem to have found that sweet spot.

AS: Yes, the car is very consistent. It was consistent the whole year. I think I was not so consistent at the beginning and had issues sometimes. But I hope I sorted it out and now, in the last three races, was quite good. The last one was quite smooth. Monaco was a great result and hopefully this kind of result can come. I think the car is always strong enough to be in the top six. It's all about getting it all right, all together, not making mistakes, whether it's me or someone else. We are a whole team and sometimes there are little things we can improve but at the moment I think we are on our way and most important to score now points as much as possible - we missed a few in the first few races - and just get better. We get better, we're on our way. I think together with Lotus we are almost now the fourth quickest team and that's a very good improvement and a great result for Force India at the moment.

Q: Nico Rosberg, two wins in the last three races. I can't think of anything you'd rather enjoy - maybe three wins in three races - but you must be loving the way this season is turning out at the moment.

NR: Yeah, for sure. It's a really nice time in my career at the moment. It's new. I've never had a car as quick as it is now, going to every next race, knowing that I go out there in qualifying I can fight for a position right at the front. And then also in the race the car is getting better and better so the chances are higher so that even on Sunday I can keep my qualifying position. And it's a really, really nice feeling. Very motivating also.

Q: If that's the case, do you see yourself and Mercedes as genuine title contenders this season?

NR: No, it's too early to say that. We're really focussing on getting our momentum, keeping it going as we have at the moment and just concentrating one race to the next, trying to get the most out of them, just as we have done now in the last couple of races - which have gone fantastically for me. And then we see, in a few races time.

Q: So anything could happen. You don't think you're the main threat to stopping Red Bull winning another world title?

NR: I don't really want to speak about a world title - yet.

Q: (Heikki Kulta - Turun Sanomat) You are now 50 points behind Sebastian, Nico. How many percentage would you give yourself to catch him in the championship?

NR: How many percent chance? Short term, I just want to annoy Sebastian and Red Bull a little bit race by race, by being ahead of them and that's the most important thing, really, to be ahead of not only them but other teams and try and win more races. That's what I'm focused on at the moment and that's what the whole team is focused on.

Q: (Frederic Ferret - L'Equipe) Question for Nico Rosberg and Sebastian Vettel: the new Pirelli will change things; what kind of things will change for Red Bull and Mercedes this weekend?

NR: Early days. We ran them in Montreal, didn't have the opportunity to learn much there because of the weather, so really there are some question marks and we have to really try and run them as much as possible in relevant circumstances this weekend, to try and learn as much as possible. But it will be interesting and it's likely to shuffle things around a little bit.

Q: We're going to get lots of running in F1, is that the case?

NR: Possibly, yeah.

Q: (Luke Smith – NBC Sports) For all of the drivers: Pirelli are bringing in new construction of tyres for the race weekend. From a safety aspect, how comfortable do you feel racing with these tyres?

SP: Well, I think it's definitely important to change something for safety, no longer for the performance. I think it's very important that we as drivers feel safe, something that could really happen, a big accident in the last race weekend, so I think that definitely it's a good thing that Pirelli is reacting to make a change.

NH: Yeah, I agree with Sergio. I think it is for safety now and there must be some action and there is some action, there are changes and I think generally this track here is not as high speed, not as many high speed corners so the tyres don't get as hard a time as they did at Silverstone. So I'm confident that this will be safe now.

AS: Yeah, as long as it's for safety, I think they have to improve it, yes, but it hasn't been a hundred percent that it was a rear tyre issue, so one says it's a tyre issue what caused the punctures at Silverstone, some people say it's maybe kerbing or something like that, so it's always hard to see where the problem is, but four punctures in a race is too much, so they have to get behind it. I feel safe on these tyres and had no problems with them. I had some two stop races, I did a two stop strategy in Silverstone so for me the concern is not so much.

DR: Not much more to add. All I can say is that you're driving as hard as you can and you don't really put it... it's definitely at the back of your mind. As we saw at the weekend, the tyres that went... it was pretty instant... I don't think any of the drivers felt much before it happened, so all we can do is drive hard and hang on, but I'm definitely... yeah, I'm sure the changes that they've made are going to be for the best. But it's definitely at the back of our mind whilst we're in the car.

SV: I think first of all that it's good that within not even a week's time, how we were able to get a different tyre for this race which hopefully is safer for all of us. Obviously the last race was not what we want and not satisfactory so I think it's good that we have a new tyre here. How much better and how different it will be is difficult to judge at this stage but I'm confident that it's a step forward.

NR: Well, I trust the FIA is going to make the right calls, as they are, they're working on it flat out together with Pirelli, so I'm sure there's going to be progress and it shouldn't be a concern this weekend.

Q: (Ralf Bach – Sport Bild) Nico, how much is your advantage, do you think, because I learned that you tested these tyres at Barcelona?

NR: To me? Oh yeah. Obviously! Yeah, so there's no advantage and we don't know if we ran this tyre in Barcelona. You have to ask Pirelli.

Q: (Rene Hoffmann – Sueddeutsche Zeitung) To Nico Hulkenberg, how do you rate the overall condition of your team? We hear stories that you haven't been paid your wage or the full wage. How do you rate the situation of the team right now?

NH: How do I rate the situation of the team? I think it's a difficult situation, like Monisha (Kaltenborn, team principal) told the press yesterday but I think she and the team and the management are working on a solution and trying to work a way out of it, to get better things. She's assured me that she's busy working on that and there's not much more I can say, other than that.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) To Sebastian and Nico: do you believe that the change in the tyres will let a new championship start from now and above all, in Hungary when more changes are expected?

NR: For sure it's very likely that it's going to have an impact, on performances, differences, qualifying/race, so it will be interesting. It's possible that it's going to mix things up a little bit but it's also an opportunity, yeah, for us as a team to try and understand it better and earlier than other people and try and make the most of it.

SV: I think it's difficult to foresee what's going to happen, as Nico said, but I think Pirelli has absolutely no interest in trying to shuffle things around. They obviously try to supply every team with a tyre, whether you like it or not, it's completely up to you but I think as we learned last weekend, it has to be safe.

Q: (Carlos Miguel – La Gaceta) Sebastian, would you like to have Daniel Ricciardo as your teammate next season?

SV: Well, I don't mind. As I said at Silverstone, after Mark announced his retirement, obviously I think it's early days to talk about that and even if it's not my decision, he sits here, right now so if I could I would give him the seat but equally if Kimi was there, I would give him the seat. It's not my intention to do any good or any bad to people. I think it's something decided by the team and so far we haven't really spoken about it. At the moment, we have other concerns. As you saw last race we retired, that was the number one concern, so to fix that problem for this race to make sure that we don't retire for the same reason again and maybe a little bit later we talk about drivers as well, but again it's not my decision. As far as I know, I think Daniel is doing a very good job and all the rest is not in my hands. Sorry mate...

Q: (Don Kennedy – Hawkes Bay Today) Sebastian, it's already been mentioned that you haven't won your home Grand Prix here. Do you feel extra pressure coming here, knowing that, or is the overall picture more important to you, in terms of the championship?

SV: Well, in terms of the championship points you can score here, it's just the same as every other place so obviously it's something special to race in front of your home crowd and I feel quite happy to have the possibility to be honest. There's other nations in Formula One and other guys that don't have the possibility to race in their home country. For example, there's no race in Mexico and Sergio would probably love to race there but it's not possible. I think it's a privilege, it's not really extra pressure. I think it's nice to see the support we get and their fascination for Formula One. Motor sport has a big standing in Germany, I think, so it's good to come here, good to come to the Nurburgring. I like the track and we will see what we get.
