



Sunday press conference

It may have been another day at the office for the 22 men on the grid, but it was all sweaty smiles for the top three finishers at the post-race press conference at the Sepang International Circuit.

Present were Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Nico Rosberg (Mercedes), and Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull).

Q: Well Lewis, congratulations, your first win this year and you got the hat-trick – pole position, the best lap time, on lap 54 I think, and now you're here. How does it feel?

Lewis HAMILTON: Incredible, incredible. After such a difficult weekend and such a long winter. We have a great crowd here today. For Petronas, who worked so hard with Mercedes to give us this win, I just feel so grateful, particularly after such a tragedy three weeks ago. I'd really like to dedicate this to those people and their families.

Q: Quite right. Tell us a bit about what it's like to drive in Malaysia. You're covered in Champagne now rather than sweat but as one wily commentator pointed out to me on the grid earlier it's incredibly hot here. It's in the mid-50s in terms of humidity and we hit 35 degrees Celsius on the track. What do you have to consider when you're driving?

LH: Yeah, you're sweating even before you get in the car. It's trying to keep you body as cool as possible and then just keep you focus. Fortunately, the team were just spot on with all the pit stops and the calling, the timing. Also the info I was getting was just spot on.

Q: It seems much clearer these days. You can hear the radio a bit more. Is that to do with the cars being a little bit quieter?

LH: It is. The cars are quieter. The most noise is the wind, the buffeting. Otherwise, what a great car, what a great job from everyone.

Q: You did a fantastic job, congratulations once again. Now, Nico, congratulations to you too, well done, sir. That was a fantastically exciting moment just there [at the start]. Did you feel Sebastian on your shoulder? Because you took such a hard line on the right, you were like less than a foot away from the side.

Nico ROSBERG: Thanks to my engineer we worked together well and we got a great start and that allowed me to go into second place. It was a bit 'iffy', Turn Three I got a bit sideways, saw plenty of action there but it worked out well and from then on I was trying to chase Lewis but he was a bit too quick today.

Q: Well, you did fantastically well, it was a superb run.

NR: Just one more thing. Malaysia you can be proud because your company Petronas has taken us to the front of F1, so you can be really proud of that. Petronas has given us the best oil and fuel in F1, it's brilliant.

Q: Sebastian, congratulations, your first time on the podium this year. You won here last year in the rain and that was an interesting race to say the least. How did it work this time being in the dry and the heat rather than the wet?

Sebastian VETTEL: It was dry last year as well.

Q: It was dry; there you go.

SV: It was a really good race. The start was not very good. I was quite surprised when I saw Nico on my right.

Q: Tell us about that.

SV: I don't know. I though I had a good start but then I focused on getting in the tow of Lewis to maybe attack him going into the first corner. Then Nico was there on the right and it was quite tight. Daniel was coming as well as I was trying to get past Nico. So I lost a place but fortunately I got it back and then later on I was trying to get as close as I could to Nico. At some stage it looked like we are pretty similar, pretty evenly matched but then it's like he found another gear, he was pulling away. In the end I was just trying to get the car home. Obviously Daniel didn't make it for a couple of reasons. All in all it's good to get another podium after Daniel has been on the podium in Australia. But we still have a long way [to go] these guys are bloody quick, congratulations to them, they did a good but we are trying to catch-up.

Q: Lewis, congratulations, the 23rd win of your career. The first 1-2 for Mercedes of the modern era, your first win in Malaysia. You weren't wanting to celebrate yesterday after that pole but I guess you will allow yourself a celebration tonight.

LH: Yeah. Definitely. Incredibly happy. My first time. It's my eighth year here and finally got that win. I really just owe it all to the team. Did a fantastic job, the guys back at the factory pushing non-stop to get the car to where it is, and of course to do it on Petronas... on our home ground... almost, to get a one-two, I mean it's quite special when you get a one-two. I've not had many in my career and so that makes it even more special. I'm really grateful for all the work that's done and... yeah, great day.

Q: Nico, I guess you're looking on your mobile there at the points position because you're not only leading the World Championship but you've extended your lead today in the World Championship. But to take you back to earlier in the race, you seemed to have a few problems with the rear tyres, we were hearing over the radio, maybe you could tell us a bit about that – and also maybe a bit about the start as well...

NR: First of all the start, I had a really good start, so I was happy about that because it's not so easy this year. The rear tyres are harder and we have more torque. So it's very difficult to get it right – but it felt great and got away well and then Sebastian, I thought he was going to put me right into the wall, but he stopped just before – so thank you for that!

SV: I had a similar experience last year...

NR: ...that doesn't make it right to do it again! My heartbeat skipped a beat a little bit but I kept right on it, it was OK anyway, it wasn't that bad. Then I had a bit of a moment in Turn Three, a bit of a tail, tank-slapper and that allowed them all to get another run on me, but it all worked out. And then I was just trying to chase Lewis but he was a bit too quick today. It was a bit difficult out there because the track was really poor, it seemed, sliding so much, and just struggling with the rear tyres especially. That made it a bit difficult out there.

Q: Sebastian, coming to you, you said over the radio at the end there that you're pretty pleased, that you've got some work to do still but you were on the whole pleased with the outcome – but you were 24.5s behind Lewis at the finish, and that's a pretty big

number still, isn't it?

SV: Yes, it is – but I don't think that's... probably Lewis could have gone faster, I think we could have gone faster at the end of the race but our priority at the end was to make sure we secure the podium. So, I think probably to see the reality, I don't know where the gaps were, probably 10, 15 laps to the end but no doubt, congratulations to them, they did a very good job, they looked nearly seamless already in winter testing, they are bloody quick, the package they have is very, very strong, we know that but I think, y'know, for us there's mostly positives that remain. After Australia, Daniel did a fantastic job here again. I think the car was very competitive, it's a completely different track, different conditions but yeah, we are there and that's the most important... I think it's much better than what we expected at some stage during the winter. We know that there's a lot we can do better – because it doesn't feel great when we are out there racing. Just if you go out on track and listen and look at how the cars behave, on power I think there's a big difference, so yeah, we know that. I think it's a question of time, how soon we manage to catch up. And then we try to give them a harder time.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Lewis, was there any difficulty during the race for you or was it an easy trip?

LH: I don't think any race is ever easy. Obviously there are opportunities that are presented in front of you and obviously you have to take them with both hands and today that's what I did but no, looking after the car, looking after fuel, not making any mistakes, it was a massive challenge in that sense. The time... I would hear that Nico had stepped up the speed, reacting to those things without damaging your tyres, so without doubt it was still a great challenge, but one that I was able to do well because the car was spectacular this weekend, so really really happy with just a great performance by the team.

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) For the three of you, do you think that the three contenders for the title are sitting up there today?

LH: I would like to think that us, as Mercedes, are the title... at least, at the moment, but there's such a long way to go. We've got a lot of competition out there so I'm sure everyone's going to be pushing and so we need to stay on it.

Q: And the championship leader?

NR: That sounds very good already as it is but there's a long way to go. I'm not thinking about that at the moment, I'm really just taking it race by race, just enjoying the moment, making the most of it, keeping on it, keeping to push. The best example is now Red Bull. The last day of testing was four weeks ago or something or three weeks ago and they were absolutely nowhere and now he (Vettel) was right in the back of me, pushing me. OK, I had some pace in hand so I could beat him in the end clearly but still, the way they've ramped up their pace, very impressive, so we need to keep on it to keep our advantage.

SV: Well, I think Fernando is missing, Daniel, Kimi and probably one other guy that we don't know yet. Still early days, but that's what I would say.

Q: (Kate Walker – Crash.net) For all three of you: we've heard an awful lot about some extreme measures that drivers have taken to stay below weight this season with the car. Now Malaysia is always a punishing race because of the heat. Was it more difficult this year, especially as we had no rain, just the physical challenge?

LH: It's always a great challenge here and today wasn't as hot as it has been in the past, I would say. Generally, this year, with a lot less downforce, it's a lot less physical – still really physical but it's not as much as years and years ago when we had so much downforce and particularly last year when we had a lot of downforce, but it's still a serious workout. Fortunately I'm just grateful my drink machine worked, even though it's like drinking hot tea, it did the job. I think the team has done a great job in terms of weight this year. We know we're not having to cut things off to get to the weight.

NR: Yeah, it's not nice that everything weight-wise is on the edge but that's the way it is. It's always a compromise between being light but still being able to perform at the highest of my abilities and I found my compromise and so I felt absolutely fine today. But of course, it is tough out there always. Malaysia is very very hot.

SV: It's always hot, it's not a walk in the park but I think we're going slower, tyres are harder, cars are slower, less downforce as Lewis touched on, so it's probably a little less hard than it was. The fact that we all try to save weight for this year... next year the weight goes up anyway which is good for the heavy drivers but for this year it's a pain for them. Doesn't help, because you're a bit more on the edge but this is probably one of the worst races. I think the most difficult one is probably Singapore later this year.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Sebastian, Red Bull made big progress between Bahrain and Melbourne, again progress between Melbourne and here. Are you happy with the speed of development, is that the speed you need in order to catch the Mercedes, let's say, when the European season starts?

SV: Yeah, we need to make big steps because they are quite far ahead but I'm quite happy with the steps we're currently making. It's the first race distance I've done this year, since Brazil, it's the first race distance I've done so that's a big step. Obviously, at some stage during testing, we didn't expect to finish the first couple of races so well done to all the guys in the team on the reliability front. It's not a big secret, we know there's still a lot to do. In terms of driveability we're not yet there where we want to be. In terms of power, it's not a big secret without giving a hammering but the guys at Viry are flat out to work on that front. Renault is pushing very very hard but at this stage we have to summarise and say that Mercedes did a better job, they're quicker than us so we know that there's a lot of things we have to do better but it's still a bloody good result today, finishing on the podium, right behind them. That's what we need to do, as long as we can, up to the point where we're even and we can challenge them and give them a harder time.

Q: (Ajit Devadason – Sify.com) Lewis, this is to do with your helmet design: the words that you have chosen for this season on the back of your helmet, Still I Rise, are you thrilled that it's working your way and it's matching belief?

LH: It's what I have tattooed on my back so I just added it to the helmet design and I think the metaphor is just that regardless of what difficulties you go through, you still rise above it. That's really something my Dad has always enforced in me. We've had so many ups and downs throughout our lives and our careers, as everyone has, but he would always 'say just rise above it' and do your talking on track. I had a difficult time in the last race and that's what I did today, so I feel quite good about it.

Race report

Lewis Hamilton secured his first victory of the 2014 Formula One season on Sunday night at Malaysia's Sepang International Circuit, two weeks after having been robbed of a likely win by mechanical failure at the season opener in Australia.

At that race, it was second-placed teammate Nico Rosberg who was perfectly positioned to pick up the lead. But in Malaysia Rosberg was left to pick up the scraps after Hamilton sailed across the finish line in a world of his own, taking the chequered flag with his teammate seventeen seconds behind in P2.

Rounding off the Malaysian podium was Sebastian Vettel, who proved that Red Bull's temporary Albert Park podium was not a fluke driven by unfair fuel use. Instead, the Milton Keynes racers appear to have made very real progress in the weeks since winter testing, with Vettel crossing the line ten seconds ahead of Ferrari's Fernando Alonso, who could have finished no better than fourth – and who was lucky to secure such a result.

For many teams it was a win-lose afternoon, with only Mercedes and Williams seeing decent results from both their drivers. While Vettel managed a podium, the unlucky Daniel Ricciardo missed out on another opportunity to score points, retiring from the Malaysian Grand Prix after a catalogue of errors including leaving the pits with a loose wheel – losing valuable time and incurring a ten-place grid drop for Bahrain – and front-wing failure. After letting him limp around at the back of the pack for a few laps the brains on the Red Bull pit wall called their man in to retire.

The end of Ricciardo's race was in stark contrast to the start, which saw the younger Red Bull driver side-by-side with his more experienced teammate in the first lap, the pair putting pressure on Rosberg through the first few corners. Vettel, Ricciardo, and Rosberg were all forced into some pretty aggressive – but legal and respectful – manoeuvres as the fight for track position carried on through the first few laps.

Alonso's fourth-place was balanced by a P12 for Kimi Raikkonen, the Finn suffering the consequences of a minor collision with Kevin Magnussen on the second lap of the race. The Ferrari driver was forced to pit with a puncture, and never really recovered from the incident, eventually crossing the line one lap down and in the wake of Romain Grosjean.

Alonso described the Malaysian Grand Prix as a nightmare, and complained that in addition to unexpected levels of tyre degradation he had suffered with every pit stop as the balance of his F14 T changed with the tyre compound. Add to that problems with the brakes and a slow top speed and there is no doubt that the Scuderia have made yet another disappointing start to a Formula One season.

There was action aplenty at Williams, where Felipe Massa was tactlessly asked to move aside for faster teammate Valtteri Bottas using exactly the same phrasing that had accompanied that now legendary demand from Ferrari race engineer Rob Smedley during the 2010 German Grand Prix at Hockenheim. The Brazilian chose to ignore the team orders on this occasion, and eventually crossed the line half a second ahead of Bottas.

Nico Hulkenberg looked to be on course for a strong fourth-place finish for much of the afternoon, but the two-stopping Force India ran out of rubber while Alonso still had grip to spare, and the Spanish racer made mincemeat of the younger man.

The biggest loser of the Malaysian Grand Prix was Hulkenberg's Force India teammate Sergio Perez; the Mexican racer was unable to start Sunday's race thanks to a gearbox failure. He was unable to make it to the grid, and the car was not prepared in time for a pit lane start.

Malaysian Grand Prix race result

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1h40m25.974s
2. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) + 17.313s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) + 24.534s
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) + 35.992s
5. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) + 47.199s
6. Jenson Button (McLaren) + 1m23.691s
7. Felipe Massa (Williams) + 1m25.076s
8. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) + 1m25.537s
9. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) + 1 lap
10. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) + 1 lap
11. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) + 1 lap
12. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) + 1 lap
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) + 1 lap
14. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) + 2 laps
15. Max Chilton (Marussia) + 2 laps

Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) RET
Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) RET
Adrian Sutil (Sauber) RET
Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) RET
Jules Bianchi (Marussia) RET
Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) RET

Sergio Perez (Force India) DNS

Saturday press conference

For the second race running, it was the Mercedes pair plus a Red Bull driver who took part in the post-qualifying press conference, despite the markedly different conditions between Sepang and Albert Park.

Present were Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), and Nico Rosberg (Mercedes).

Q: Lewis, it was pretty close at the end. Obviously a very tough day in terms of the conditions and stoppages, how great is the joy at the moment?

Lewis HAMILTON: A bit all over the place at the moment. I'm really happy, firstly with the job the team has done and just generally how well we have done throughout the weekend. But today was just incredible, how much, firstly, it rained before qualifying and then during the session it was very, very tricky out there I think for everyone. Particularly at the end it was almost impossible to see anything. During my last lap I just couldn't see a thing behind Hulkenberg. I couldn't see where the track went, didn't know where the corners were, when to brake. To start the lap I couldn't see where Fernando was behind me, so it was impossible to try to get a gap, so I had to bail out. But fortunately... very close. These guys [Vettel and Red Bull Racing] are definitely a little bit too close, so happy to be here.

Q: I make it five one hundredths of a second between you at the end there. Sebastian, you had to recover from an early setback, with a reset that you had to have on your car. What was that all about and how do you feel about where you ended up as a result?

Sebastian VETTEL: Well, obviously, yeah, the beginning of Q1, the heartbeat was definitely rising very quickly when we realised there was an issue, restarted the car, which seemed to solve the problem. After that it was fine, so it was good to go out and get another feel for the car, in the wet, with the conditions. As Lewis touched on it was very tricky. Q3 was not perfect; I would have loved to have a second go. My first attempt, I felt there was a little bit of time to gain here and there, so obviously very, very close; too close because definitely the margin was possible to go that much faster but equally I think if Lewis had another chance he would have improved as well. Would, could, should – at the end of the day it's good to be on the front row. If I'm not wrong I should be on the good side [of the grid] tomorrow. It depends on how good the start is but for sure very happy with the result.

Q: It looked as though you were perhaps faster than your team-mate on the intermediates, but then slower when it went to the full wet conditions but again a very close fight between you.

Nico ROSBERG: Yeah, it was, except for right at the end unfortunately. I was a little bit less comfortable on the full wets, especially in braking, so I'll have to look into that. But other than that, it's still a decent place to be, third place. The race is going to be long tomorrow; who knows what the weather is going to do and everything. So that's OK, just looking forward to tomorrow now, to try to make the most of it again.

Q: Well done. Coming back to you Lewis. Your second consecutive pole but I guess after what happened to you in Australia your focus is 100 per cent on getting some points on the board tomorrow?

LH: Definitely, definitely, for myself and for the team the priority is to try to bag as many points, collectively, me and Nico. I think we have a great opportunity, we've got a great car and the team's just performing fantastically right now, so fingers crossed we both see our way through to the finish line.

Q: Can I bring you back to the question I asked Nico about the difference between you on the intermediates early on in the qualifying and then the full wets later on? What's your side of the story, in terms of how you saw that?

LH: Not much really. Wasn't really able to drag the most out of the Inters and when I got to the Extremes it was much easier extract it. I saw where I was losing time and it was very easy to correct it. Obviously my lap at the end, what I qualified on, was obviously not my optimum, not my best lap, it was the first lap so at the end I kind of just messed it up for myself, I was in an awkward position, I wasn't able to go get another lap but naturally I think with the fresh tyres there was more grip, so I should have been able to eke out a little bit more time.

Q: Sebastian, how do you see the state of play now? Obviously we're a grand prix-and-a-half under our belts in this season, we've had some dry running, some wet running – how do you see the state of play between yourselves, Mercedes, possibly Ferrari as well up front?

SV: Well, to be honest I think Mercedes as a team has the best package. They've done a very good job across the break. Obviously with new rules there was a lot of work, so I think they're the favourites at the moment, no matter, I think, where we go. As a fact, after that I think it's fairly close between the other Mercedes-powered teams and probably Ferrari and us. I think we're similar, depending on the day, conditions etc., but difficult to judge. As you said, it's only one-and-a-half races in. But I'm very happy, to be honest, because we had a bad winter, but the team is fired up, the guys are pushing still flat out. I cannot even imagine how they must feel. It was very tough, we didn't run a lot, so for us drivers it wasn't very tough but they surely had a lot of jobs to do on the car: cover off, engine off, change the engine, change this, change that. A lot of work, but they are very happy and it seemed to pay off, bit by bit. Obviously we still have a way to go but... yeah, that's how I see it.

Q: Nico, of the three drivers up there, obviously you're the only one who's completed a competitive race distance in a grand prix – can you talk a little bit about the strategy, not just the tyres but also the deployment of these new energy recovery systems. How big an impact can conserving, discharging etc., how big an impact that can have on the racing.

NR: It's not as much as I would have thought initially because on a track like here, there's not that much you can do. It's so easy to... you boost a little bit more on the straight and you discharge a little bit more back there and it's all done. It's not like you can push someone into having no battery charge left and then easily overtake him – that's not the case. I thought it was going to go a bit more in that direction but actually it's much more simple than expected. Still, of course, a little bit can be done...

Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Sebastian, do you think that with the rain you can beat the Mercedes or are they still too quick for the Red Bulls?

SV: I think we always have a chance to beat everyone, that's why we're here. Obviously, as I said, in terms of a package, I think they have the most competitive package. Lewis isn't digging around, equally, Nico is doing a very good job. It's difficult to beat them on the day but it's not impossible. It would be quite sad to wake up in the morning thinking that you can only finish second or fifth or eighth. We're here to win. We know that in the rain everything is possible, it's more likely for us to make a mistake, maybe the performance of the car is not that important compared to the dry, to raw dry conditions. We will see what happens tomorrow. If the race is at the same time, I think there is no rain or not so much rain forecast but there's always a chance around here. We will see but I think yesterday was good, today was very good so it should be a good race. I'm keen to find out where we are, where I stand. Obviously I haven't done a race since Brazil last year so I'm looking forward to tomorrow.

Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Question to Sebastian and Nico: at the end of Q3 you were almost coming together, I think. Sebastian, you weren't able to do another lap, what happened there?

SV: Nico couldn't see much in his mirrors, I guess. Obviously I was on a flying lap and Nico was preparing his hot lap, if that's correct, and not much happened. Obviously I was pissed off at the time because... sorry, I was angry at that time, at that moment because I turned into turn 12 not knowing where to turn in because I couldn't see anything. The lap was lost but equally I think there was another car in front of Nico...

NR: I don't think that was me.

SV: No, so then it was Lewis. I think it was a Mercedes.

NR: I don't think it was me. I never had anybody behind me.

SV: Anyways, I ran into traffic, not really, there were two seconds or three seconds gap but enough so that the next corner was completely blind. That's it.

Q: (Yassmin Abdel-Magied – RichardsFl.com) Lewis, you're now the best English qualifier and equal best British, how does this make you feel and were you surprised by how close Red Bull and Mercedes were in terms of times?

LH: Yeah, definitely. The thing is in qualifying so much is going on so sometimes you forget... you don't forget but you're caught in situations and you wish you had another lap. For sure, I don't fully understand exactly why everyone closes up, particularly Red Bulls get a little bit closer to us when it is wet. That's something we have to work on but naturally I think, they're always quick in the wet. [Hey guys, I can't even hear myself talk.]

SV: We're still figuring out who it was...

LH: But very very proud to be representing the UK and to be amongst the names like Nigel Mansell and James Hunt, James Clark, sorry, Jim Clark, is really really a real honour to be there.

Saturday report

After a 50-minute delay caused by the regularly-scheduled Malaysian monsoon which tends to start somewhere around lap 3 of the grand prix, qualifying finally got underway in wet conditions at the Sepang International Circuit.

Despite the soggy circuit and proliferation of puddles, the early minutes of Q1 were remarkably free from spins and incidents. Mercedes continued to demonstrate the strong form that put the Silver Arrows at the top of the timesheets during every practice session.

Sebastian Vettel's afternoon was curtailed by a problem with the energy store that saw the Red Bull driver back in the pits before the session was half-run: the German's banker lap was a 2m00.422s effort that was no guarantee of inclusion in Q2. But resetting the energy store was the work of a few moments, and Vettel was back out with more than seven minutes remaining. At the four-minute mark, the defending champion was up in third.

With under a minute remaining, Marcus Ericsson brought out the red flags with a dramatic self-induced spin that took place when the Swede – already struggling for grip in the wet – lost control of his car having put a wheel on the painted line, plunging into the gravel and hitting the Armco before spinning back onto the track and into the path of Esteban Gutierrez, taking out a polystyrene marker board along the way.

The famous Finns – Kimi Raikkonen and Valtteri Bottas – elected to gamble on inters at the beginning of Q2, risking spins on the treacherous tarmac. But the gamble came to naught when the red flags were brought out only two minutes in to the session thanks to an altercation between Fernando Alonso and Daniil Kvyat that cost the Ferrari driver a suspension arm and the Toro Rosso a front wing endplate, leaving debris across the track.

Both men returned to the track when the session restarted, and the incident will be investigated by the stewards after qualifying.

Conditions worsened as the session went on, and even a swap to full wets was not enough to save Bottas from the dropout zone when the chequered flag fell. It was 15 minutes of spins and offs, with Hamilton's pace-setting time 2.2s slower than the time the Mercedes driver set in Q1.

The final qualifying session saw a mix of tyre strategies as cars left the pits, with most electing for full wets while a few brave souls went out on inters. But after the exploratory laps were complete, only Jenson Button was confident enough to stay on Pirelli's green offering.

With five minutes remaining, Hamilton held provisional pole with only a 0.055s lead over Vettel. The Red Bull driver left the pits on fresh wets while the Briton was still completing a lap, and it was a close call as to whether or not the Mercedes driver would have time to change tyres and start a final flyer before the chequered flag fell.

Hamilton entered the pits with just over three minutes remaining, but the end of the session was so wet as to make improvement borderline impossible. Vettel maintained his front row start, while despite a late improvement from Rosberg it was Hamilton who retained pole.

Provisional grid

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m59.431s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m59.486s
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 2m00.050s
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 2m00.175s
5. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 2m00.541s
6. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 2m01.218s
7. Nico Hulkenberg (Sauber) 2m01.712s
8. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 2m02.213s
9. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 2m03.078s
10. Jenson Button (McLaren) 2m04.053s

11. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 2m02.351s
12. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 2m02.369s
13. Felipe Massa (Williams) 2m02.460s
14. Sergio Perez (Force India) 2m02.511s
15. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 2m02.756s
16. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 2m02.885s

17. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) 2m02.074s
18. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 2m02.131s
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 2m02.702s
20. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 2m03.595s
21. Max Chilton (Marussia) 2m04.388s
22. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 2m04.407s

Friday press conference

For once the Friday press conference ignored various scandals and dramas to focus on FI's successes and means of future engagement.

Present were Cyril Abiteboul (Caterham), Federico Gastaldi (Lotus), Paul Hembery (Pirelli), Monisha Kaltenborn (Sauber), Graeme Lowdon (Marussia), and Franz Tost (Toro Rosso).

Q: Cyril, can I begin with you? You did a lot of mileage in the pre-season testing but it's not been so good when it's come to the actual action, in Australia and again today. Can you give us an idea of what the problem is?

Cyril ABITEBOUL: Yes. To be honest we are the first one to be a bit surprised by the situation. It's true that we were quite happy with the situation after the test but I think it demonstrates that it's still a little bit random. It's a bit random for everyone, for all parts of the car, whether it be chassis, gearbox, engine. I think we are just demonstrating that given the number of new things that there are on this car, given the regulations, they do not really send a warning before they hit you and unfortunately they are hitting us more during the season than they were hitting us before. So I mean let's see. We are trying to stay calm, to take things as they come. Obviously we are not in the best position to prepare the weekend. But despite that we managed to have a good recovery last race in Melbourne so hopefully that happens again, even though I don't want to try my luck too much.

Q: Specifically there were some problems with Kamui with the power unit in Australia, Was that the problem again today for him? No running at all for him.

CA: Yeah, it was a mix. It started with some issue related to the power unit and it actually continued with some issues that are more related to the clutch and gearbox. I don't want to comment too much. It's all the systems, all the complex systems that are on the car, in addition to the difficult serviceability of the modern cars that makes our life extremely difficult – not just us, pretty much everyone on the grid.

Q: Thank you for that. Coming to Federico Gastaldi from Lotus, the new Deputy Team Principal – congratulations. It's not been an easy couple of races for you either, particularly today once again troubled running. What's the situation?

Federico GASTALDI: Well we've been having problems with the mapping in P1 and then Pastor's turbo blow out and we had to change the engine. We are working very, very hard with Renault trying to find out solutions for the weekend and to move forward for the next race as well.

Q: You're the Deputy Team Principal. Can you tell us what your role actually means in terms of what you do back at Enstone and how you relate with all the rest of these people here and the FIA and FOM? What's your role?

FG: Actually we have a new CEO and we have... the Team Principal is Gerard Lopez the chairman of the company. For the time being I will be looking to the relationship between the team and FIA, FOM and again all the partners and sponsors, during the races that Gerard is not here.

Q: Paul, coming to you? There was some talk in the radio in the second free practice session about some tyre degradation for one or two teams. What is the objective of what Pirelli is looking to achieve this year with the tyres and how they affect the racing?

Paul HEMBERY: It hasn't really changed, the input that we've had from the teams and the promoter in that we're aiming to have races of two stops, maybe three in some cases and to create that you're going to create a thermal degradation otherwise you won't have the stops we're searching for. But it was important this year that we did some work on trying to move towards less marbles on the circuit although we did a bit track cleaning today so it was quite messy, the first session. And also that the tyres life has increased. From the data we have seen so far, we appear to be in that right directions.

Of course it's all very new for the teams. It's new for us as well, understanding what the real impact on the tyres and the car combination will be and it's only now that we're starting to see the teams working more on what to do with the tyres and what will eventually be part of their race strategy.

Q: Of course you've got the first of the new two-day, in-season tests coming up in a couple of weeks' time. Can you tell us what's planned and what the focus will be?

PH: We're looking to next season essentially and trying to evolve the product going forward in the future. We have a moving target – the cars this year it's suggested will develop at twice the rate of a normal season, maybe that's up to four seconds. So we have to take that into account when we're looking at what we're doing going forward. So we're trying to always develop things to have available if and when they are required. We'll see how we get on but clearly there are still some issues with the teams' running, so I think to do testing after a race will be a big challenge for all involved but we have to be also realistic in our aims.

Q: Coming to Monisha. In what sort of mood does Sauber enter the 2014 season?

Monisha KALTENBORN: Well, in an optimistic mood because when you look at last season, where we ended, we could see that we did bring a certain change into our performance and it wasn't looking that bad. Of course we know that this year is very new, particularly with the rule changes, and we are confident that in many areas, particularly reliability, we are pretty much where we want to be. We are not happy with the overall performance, but we have identified the areas and step by step we are moving ahead and implementing the measures.

Q: And how did today go for you?

MK: It was pretty alright. I think the engineers got through their programme. Again, we're not quite happy with the long run and we need to do a bit of work on that. We know that we can't do miracles and take a huge step compared to where we want to be and where we are but step by step I think we'll get there.

Q: Graeme, coming to you, obviously a shake-up of the pecking order with the new technology, the new Formula One. Does this bring you closer that first points-scoring finish?

Graeme LOWDON: I certainly hope so. From a general point of view, we wanted one of two things: either for the rules to stay generally the same so that we could play catch-up, or for there to be a radical and obviously there has been a radical change for all the right reasons within the sport and that's given us a chance. I think considering the resources we have at hand we did a good job over the winter. We didn't get the mileage that we wanted to get in pre-season testing so we're still playing catch-up quite a bit and still learning a lot about the car. Pretty much every time we run it now we're learning a lot in terms of reliability and performance.

Q: Obviously you come from a business background. From a business perspective does this new face of Formula One make it easier to sell? Are you finding that?

GL: Well, it should do. That was kind of one of the points for all of the teams for all of the teams and the sport committing to it. There are an awful lot of positives about the new formula, although some of the innovations need to be sold, they need to be communicated well to the fans and when I say that I mean all the fans – the TV fans, the ones who turn up at a race, the ones who follow it through social media or new media or whatever. We can all improve how we communicate those things because there are a lot of plus points. There is some incredible engineering and some incredible technology going into these cars now and you see the cars move around a lot more. The drivers have got to work and think a lot harder. So hopefully that comes across to the fans. Ultimately, it's kind of irrelevant what I think about what the fans think, it's what they think that's the most important thing. It's important that we listen to them and see whether they understand and like the new formula.

Q: Franz, two cars in the top 10 in Australia, both in qualifying and in the race, something you didn't manage to achieve during the 2013 season, so a great start to the season. What's the story of your start to 2014, what's the secret?

Franz TOST: I think the team did a very good job in Melbourne as well as the drivers and we struggled a little bit in the preparation. But it was good that we were the first time of Renault being out on the track for a filming day and from then onwards we learned all the troubles and fortunately could solve them. Generally, the basis of the car is quiet good – from the reliability side as well as from the performance side: the mechanic is good, the aerodynamic is OK. I must say the last weeks before the Melbourne race, the teams – that means Toro Rosso as well as Renault – worked a lot. Hardly [ever] the lights went off in Faenza and at the end the result was shown in Melbourne with us finishing in the points.

Q: I wonder from a human perspective, from a personal perspective your feelings on seeing Daniel Ricciardo being competitive from straight away in the Red Bull, having moved up from your team as a graduate to be alongside another one of your graduates Sebastian Vettel?

FT: I expected this good performance from Daniel because he was very fast also with us. I expect that he will also have quite a successful future together with Red Bull Racing at the side of Sebastian.

Q: (Yassmin Abdel-Magied – RichardsFL.com) My question, I have two questions for the panel, as a trained mechanical engineer I found it extremely frustrating that, even though at Melbourne a lot of people thought we wouldn't even have cars reach the end, we had 15 cars finish. How and why did the sport fail to celebrate the success – and Graeme you alluded to this – of the technical success of the teams, given the huge regulation changes. And, secondly, as a young 22-year old I've got to ask what must the sport do to be able to appeal to a younger and broader audience?

CA: I think it is difficult because with Formula One, I can't celebrate my success. So I think that's one of the difficulties actually of Formula One – that it's a community of people who are fighting against each other. I'm pretty sure that the people on the podium will be celebrating for their own success. Obviously I can't celebrate anything because after 28 laps I had nothing to look at and I could go back to the UK. I think it's a difficulty and actually it's possibly something that is missing in Formula One, some form of body – without referring to FOTA because it was not necessarily that type of body that I was thinking of – that is basically, as you say, when there is a collective success, that is capable of celebrating and when there is a collective failure is capable to look at it and maybe to do something with it. I think it is something missing but it is due to the incredible competitiveness that there is in our sport and in our business.

Q: Monisha, do you have a view on this?

MK: Well I agree with that but we cannot – have not – managed so far to actually appear as a united body and bring across these kind of messages and that's particularly sad at this point of time because we've entered into an absolutely new era, particularly with regard to the powertrain unit. That's such a strong message. We have such a sophisticated hybrid system. These are the kind of things, if you look at the consumer market, everyone's going to there. It's about less consumption, it's about such high efficiency and exactly that's what we are showcasing here – and what we should do at Formula One, that you show the highest level of these technologies in our sport. So from that perspective, it's been the absolute right move but, as you see, there's so much negativism coming from within Formula One itself which is the alarming sign. It's really for us – all – that we go out there and if we can't manage to do it together, we simply have to do it on our own – but to put across that we've got these right messages. And that's what we need to convince the public and the fans about. Because that's something they can understand and they can make the sport far more attractive again.

Q: Paul, you work across a number of different disciplines – what do you think? What's your answer? How did Formula One fail to celebrate its success.

PH: Having seen how hard the teams are working, I think when you know how hard they're working, they really just finish a race and on to the next one. There isn't a case of celebrating, they're on to the next challenge. But, I think what Monisha said about relevant technologies is important. If we take it from a road car business, we work with a number of people in F1 on their road car business. Ferrari LaFerrari and the McLaren P1 are both cars

that have hybrid technologies – so we also see that now appearing in our day to day business. So it is becoming relevant – which was one of the big objectives of making the change. Over time I'm quite sure that the teams and particularly the powertrain suppliers, will explain more and more – and I've stared seeing, myself, explanations of the technology because it is going to affect people in every form of life. Small capacity turbo engines will be norm everywhere going forward and more and more as well the hybrid. In terms of appealing to the younger audience, that's always difficult because the younger audience today is one that have a lot of things thrown at them and have a lot of entertainment options. On that level, personally I think we don't make enough of the drivers. It's one of the few motorsport areas I think where we could be doing a lot more in promoting the personalities of the drivers and the great talents of the drivers. If you take another extreme, whereas NASCAR where the drivers are very big individual personal starts, I think it's a shame sometimes that we have some great, amazing – the best – drivers in the world but maybe they're not promoted as individuals as much as they should be. The youth today also quite look forward to seeing icons. They like having an icon to look forward to and unfortunately motor racing drivers have a helmet on, you don't see the face but maybe we need to see them more in a lifestyle environment, a more approachable environment where people attach to them as individuals.

Q: Federico, you have a promoter's background, coming from Argentina but also a music background too – what do you think Formula One can do to appeal more to a young audience?

FG: Well, I think that there's a lot of opportunities to engage Formula One with a young audience. We just need to understand the tools to engage with the young people. Tools that were not available in the past, when I was running the Grand Prix in Argentina for example. We have access to so much information now that we should pay more attention how to engage with them.

Q: Final word on this Graeme, on the second part of the question, about reaching a younger audience.

GL: I think it's an interesting question but it's also a vital question because what we don't want is an audience for Formula One that is big but aging. We want to capture young people. As Federico said, we operate in a sport that's incredibly rich with data and youngsters today, they interact. They enjoy interacting in lots of different ways. And so we have so many assets at our disposal as a sport. Not just in terms of video pictures but in terms of data and information and comments and commentary that I think if we get the recipe right, there's an enormous opportunity to grow the fan base exponentially. And that can only be good for the sport in the long run. So, see it as... it's a huge opportunity, and hopefully an opportunity that the sport will take.

Q: (Joe Saward – Grand Prix Special) You were talking there about making the drivers more promotable – surely it's the team principals who are the problem here because they block the drivers from saying things and make them characters? Would you say that you're culpable in this respect because you're protecting your sponsors from some lunatic driver?

FT: First of all, at Toro Rosso the drivers can say what they want. We don't tell them what they have to tell to the press. And we have a quite good and positive relationship with all our sponsors where the drivers do always a good job because they get the feedback from them. From this perspective I think all of the people at Toro Rosso are happier. Just coming back to the other question before, regarding the celebration of Formula One and so on, Formula One has faced now the biggest regulation change in the history, and what we saw in Melbourne was, at the end, I must say, a good race because many cars, more cars finished the race than expected before. It was also quite an interesting race. From the technical side, Formula One has reached a very, very high level because we have now everything together what in future road cars will have: it's the engine which is turbocharged, then we have energy recovery systems, we have two systems and we have sorted out nearly all the problems within a short period of time – and therefore I think from this point of view, the teams, together with the engine manufacturers have done a good job. Regarding the young people, you can attract the young people if you have a local hero. I remember when I came to Germany in the '80s, no-one was interested in Formula One. Absolutely no-one. And then Michael came and then everybody was interested in Formula One. You could see it on the kart tracks. Many, many kart tracks were built up. The same with Poland when Kubica came into Formula One. I think this is decisive. You need a local hero and then the young people are always interested in Formula One.

Q: Monisha, going back to Joe's question about muzzling the drivers or not given them a chance to be their own personalities.

MK: Well of course we're not culpable of anything here. What else can we say? I think what's important here is that we somehow have to come up with more ideas how you can make partners interested in how to use a driver and a personality – because I think we are beyond that time where you can just invite him, let's say, for a dinner or an event or something like that. And people want to engage more with them. So I think we as teams have to be more creative about these things. Of course sometimes you have to tell them to be careful – maybe when they talk to Joe – but that's it, nothing more.

Q: (Kate Walker – crash.net) Carrying on with the theme of young people engagement and what can and can't be done, to what extent do you think that broadcasting rights issues coming from the commercial rights holder, the inability of people to discover Formula One on YouTube, to use the sources that they use in their everyday lives, is preventing Formula One from growing a youth audience?

FG: That's an interesting question. I think, again, we have to be careful what we say to the youngsters. But I think if we put together the right tools – you mentioned YouTube – this is a sport, we just need to have the right package to show to the young people, to be an example for them, so that's my point of view.

CA: It's a tricky question. I think we need to find the right balance between the accessibility, exclusivity and value. I think that there is a belief right now that more exclusivity creates value. Maybe this was true, maybe it's less true with new media where it's more the distribution and our people need to react with content that is creating value. If you look at Facebook, there is nothing exclusive in Facebook and I think that the value of the IPO of Facebook is quite historic, just like the value of different transactions that have just happened so you may argue that there is a bubble of internet but I think Formula One would be happy to have such a bubble. I think those are the sort of things that we maybe have to look at, that maybe a lack of exclusivity maybe does not mean a lack of value.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) Jean Todt has stated his intention of imposing cost control regulations by 2015. That means they will have to go through the entire regulatory process by the 30th of June to be ratified by the World Motor Sport Council, so you have three months to do that. Has sufficient progress been made, and from your team's perspectives, what sort of level of cost cap, cost control, budget cap or whatever would you like to see?

GL: I think progress is being made, I think it's difficult to say whether it's on target, behind or ahead because there's no real blueprint for this at all. What there has to be is just a will amongst the teams for it to happen for the good of the sport and I think it would be for the good of the sport. I remain optimistic that something will happen within the timeframe and it will improve Formula One.

MK: I can confirm that from our perspective that progress is being made, we are working on papers and I think it's more than just an intention of the FIA to do this. The teams got together with the other stakeholders and there was an agreement amongst everyone that we have to do something here. We looked at different ways to do it so I think that's already a big step in itself and we are making progress so I'm confident that sticking to that agreement amongst everyone, we will have some cost control next year.

FT: You know there are a lot of discussions going on and I'm convinced that sooner or later we will come to a cost cut to whichever solution to come down with the costs.

Q: (Dieter Rencken – Racing Lines) What about the second part? What value should it be set at?

CA: I think some figures have already circulated. It depends what we want to achieve. I think a first step at 200 million would already do something. That's not necessarily the official Caterham position in that respect, that's a figure that has been mentioned and that would already have an effect.

Then to scope the currency also, I don't think we have mentioned currency, it's maybe a debate for a future date.

FG: Again, lots of discussions going on. I think we would have to put an agreement all together to see how to move forward.

PH: I think it's one of those areas where there's never a perfect solution. If you look at other sports that have tried to impose financial controls from football with financial fair play which limits spending to income levels - it's not just about the spending level, it's also about income levels and the ability for teams to acquire incoming funds, as much as what they're spending. So I think it's a complex subject for all of them and I look forward to the FI Commission meeting to hear the proposals.

GL: Not trying to avoid the question, Dieter, but it's difficult to put a number on it, it's more to do with the - as Cyril has alluded - to the mechanism - and Paul's alluded to as well - a combination of cost control and how revenues come into the sport. I think that one of the key things that we can learn from other sports is that it is entirely possible to do this, I think that's something that's really important. You still hear people saying that it might be difficult or it might even be impossible to do it and I personally think that's nonsense. Formula One has introduced the biggest technical change that we've seen certainly in my generation and it's been done successfully. Most other global sports have introduced - for the better of the sport - financial mechanisms which do work to greater or lesser extents but they do work and therefore I think one of the things that I would be really keen to see emphasised is that these mechanisms do work, they can be done and it's certainly not impossible.

Q: (Joe Saward - Grand Prix Special) Formula One needs to be a corporation all pointing in the same direction. Is that possible and can I have an answer from everybody please?

FT: Theoretically, everything is possible. In practice, it's a different story, because there's the competition between the different teams but nevertheless, there's the teams, the commercial rights holder and the FIA and at the end, up to now, we always have found a proper solution for Formula One and this will also be the case in the future. Therefore I'm quite optimistic that all the parties will work together.

MK: I think it is possible but we really have to change the entire set-up that we have right now and then the question comes up, is that really necessary or could you still find a solution with the set-ups we have now, but with the green on maybe the right objectives and targets for the sport? So I think it would be a radical step if we do that, if we could do it, I guess, if we agree, but I think we should start with smaller steps and make sure that we know where the future is going to for Formula One.

CA: I think that's exactly it. I think there is nothing right now in the set-up that aligns the interests of the different teams and therefore it's only the competitive spirit that remains. Maybe if we had a different business model like a franchise, for instance, that would be a better way to align the interests of everyone and therefore the shareholders of the different teams would have the same sort of interest but we have to wonder again if it is worth going in that direction. It may not be the case.

FG: I think it would be good if all the teams... it would be good for the sport if we are all in the same boat. I think so.

PH: Obviously we get to see all of the teams, the FIA, the promoter and everyone together and I think the one common theme is that everybody wants to see a very strong and successful Formula One, so the basic desire is there to do it and let's see if we're able to do that over the next period of time.

GL: I certainly hope so. I think to some extent it depends what everybody wants or all the different players want and if what everybody wants is to maximise the potential of Formula One over the next ten, twenty years then the answer has to be yes, that's the only way it's going to be maximised, is if everyone works together.

Friday report

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. As teams, pundits, and fans alike desperately tried to read as much as possible into Friday's two practice sessions at Malaysia's Sepang International Circuit, all that was certain - other than the long-established pace of the Mercedes - is that in Formula One, no one stands still for very long.

Red Bull's improvement between winter testing and season proper was plain to see in Melbourne, and on Friday afternoon Sebastian Vettel hammered the message home when he finished FP2 third on the timesheets, just ahead of F1 pacesetter Lewis Hamilton.

And Red Bull were not the only outfit to have found more pace in Sepang than was possible in Albert Park, with Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen finishing second in both sessions, the high-speed corners in Malaysia far better-suited to the F14 T than the slower turns of the Melbourne track.

But it is all too easy to try and read too much into lap times, as the right combination of tyres, fuel load, and timing can see the most unlikely driver lead the pack. The emphasis should be on the long-run times, and it was here that Red Bull appear to have gained the most, with less tyre degradation than their rivals at the end of their marathon efforts. Despite his obvious speed, Raikkonen was one of the men worst-affected by degradation and graining over the course of the day.

Where degradation was an issue for some, the track conditions themselves proved challenging for all, with Malaysia's regular downpours doing an effective job of washing the track clean between each of the events and championships that Sepang plays host to over the course of a year. Friday morning proved to be particularly difficult on the grip front, with drivers both hardened and green taking trips across the gravel, or fighting to stay on track as they skittered off the line and onto the marbles.

After a strong show of form in Australia, there were high hopes for McLaren, who arrived in Sepang with upgrades Ron Dennis promised would deliver half a second. And while Jenson Button and Kevin Magnussen were undoubtedly fast in F1, over the course of an afternoon that saw the team focus on longer runs, both men struggled for pace with a low-downforce set-up.

Whatever difficulties McLaren were experiencing, however, were of the sort that can be fixed with fine-tuning. Lotus and Caterham were in a far worse position. Friday morning saw no times set by either Lotus driver, while Kamui Kobayashi was five seconds behind the Marussia of Max Chilton after five paltry laps. In FP2, Pastor Maldonado did not run at all, while Romain Grosjean was unable to set a time after losing his gearbox after 14 laps, while Kobayashi was also unable to run. In contrast, teammate Marcus Ericsson managed 55 laps over the course of the day.

F1 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m40.691s [19 laps]
2. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m40.843s [20 laps]
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m41.028s [19 laps]
4. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m41.111s [20 laps]
5. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m41.274s [18 laps]
6. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m41.402s [15 laps]
7. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m41.523s [19 laps]
8. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m41.642s [19 laps]
9. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m41.686s [23 laps]
10. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m41.830s [22 laps]
11. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m41.923s [14 laps]
12. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m42.117s [20 laps]
13. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m42.365s [21 laps]

14. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m42.869s [21 laps]
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m42.904s [23 laps]
16. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m43.825s [18 laps]
17. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m45.775s [24 laps]
18. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m46.911s [10 laps]
19. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) 1m51.180s [5 laps]
20. Sergio Perez (Force India) NO TIME SET [2 laps]
21. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) NO TIME SET [2 laps]
22. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) NO TIME SET [4 laps]

FP2 times (unofficial)

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1m39.909s [30 laps]
2. Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari) 1m39.944s [30 laps]
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1m39.970s [30 laps]
4. Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes) 1m40.051s [32 laps]
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1m40.103s [29 laps]
6. Felipe Massa (Williams) 1m40.112s [34 laps]
7. Daniel Ricciardo (Red Bull) 1m40.276s [29 laps]
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1m40.628s [28 laps]
9. Valtteri Bottas (Williams) 1m40.638s [35 laps]
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1m40.691s [34 laps]
11. Jean-Eric Vergne (Toro Rosso) 1m40.777s [33 laps]
12. Kevin Magnussen (McLaren) 1m41.014s [20 laps]
13. Adrian Sutil (Sauber) 1m41.257s [28 laps]
14. Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso) 1m41.325s [32 laps]
15. Esteban Gutierrez (Sauber) 1m41.407s [34 laps]
16. Sergio Perez (Force India) 1m41.671s [25 laps]
17. Romain Grosjean (Lotus) 1m42.531s [14 laps]
18. Max Chilton (Marussia) 1m43.638s [20 laps]
19. Jules Bianchi (Marussia) 1m43.752s [29 laps]
20. Marcus Ericsson (Caterham) 1m45.703s [31 laps]
21. Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham) NO TIME SET [0 laps]
22. Pastor Maldonado (Lotus) NO TIME SET [0 laps]

Thursday press conference

After a controversial start to the season in Albert Park, the Thursday press conference in Sepang was an opportunity for the drivers to reflect on 2014 thus far.

Present were Valtteri Bottas (Williams), Kamui Kobayashi (Caterham), Daniil Kvyat (Toro Rosso), Pastor Maldonado (Lotus), Kimi Raikkonen (Ferrari), and Nico Rosberg (Mercedes).

Q: Valtteri, we'll start with you. Quite a race in Australia, 15th to sixth, hit the wall, back down to 15th, back up to sixth again, very eventful. But what do you think was possible that day?

Valtteri BOTTAS: Yeah, really eventful. If we look at it as a whole race we need to be happy. With the result we have more points, double the points than last year. So it's a good beginning for us but it could have been better. We could have definitely, without my mistake, been fighting for the podium.

Q: Tell us a little bit about what these cars are like to drive. Obviously less rear end stability, more of a handful into and out of the corners. How are you finding it so far?

VB: Yeah, the cars have quite a bit less downforce than last year so you're sliding a bit more, with more engine power also it makes it a bit more tricky, but I like it. I really think the cars are good fun to drive. I hope it looked good from outside I think we made an exciting race with the new cars, new engines, so I think it's good.

Q: Coming to you Daniil. Obviously the youngest ever points scorer with that result in Australia at the age of 19. How do you feel about that and the start you've made?

Daniil KVVYAT: It was a good race, also eventful for us. It was everything new for me, so obviously many things to learn during the qualifying, the race, so it was good. P10 is an OK result but we always want some more. In the end, we would always like to get some more points in the future and the more we get the better it is.

Q: I wonder if you could talk about the step up [to Formula One]. Prior to this the longest race you've ever done is 35 or 40 minutes, before you raced in Australia and then of course, the challenge of this weekend in particular so soon [into your F1 career]?

DK: Yeah, you're right, it was a very long race but I found a good rhythm and it wasn't looking so long anymore. Here it's going to be a bit different because it's much, much warmer. Let's see how this challenge will be done. It's hard for me to say now but for the moment it's looking pretty hot but it shouldn't be a big problem in the end.

Q: Coming to Kamui. Welcome back to Formula One. How does it feel to be back?

Kamui KOBAYASHI: Hi, first of all I think I have to say it's great to be back in Formula One. I think after one break doing like GT... I think definitely I enjoyed GT but Formula One is one of the top categories and I also think I was missing the development and of course racing with the top drivers, which I think is one of the most exciting times, so I'm very happy to be back.

Q: Obviously, quite a tough opening weekend for you in Australia. What has the team learned, first of all about what happened at the start and also about the general problems you suffered at the weekend, and how much have you been able to put right?

KK: Well, first of all, unfortunately I think that in 2014 the first crash is myself is not really good! But it's not really fault, it's coming from the system. I do anything without the rear brake and that was the first proper braking. I mean, at this point I felt straight away, I felt panic, I was a little bit crazy because my car doesn't stop and I can't avoid... I feel very sorry for Felipe, just... I don't want to crash of course like that and I don't want to end up like that. That's what happened, a racing accident, so I think we have to find what is really the problem, but we have to find out that it never happens the next time. I think through the week, I'd say it was a very difficult week for us because we missed the complete Friday and we went to FP3. Unfortunately we had not much time to change any settings between practice and qualifying. So, I think we went to Q2, which is very happy but I

think we have to look at more potential from what we have. Still we didn't bring any potential from the car. So I'm quite excited, looking forwards to this weekend. This week is our home race, so it's very important to having a great result and of course I think a lot of Malaysian fans are excited about Formula One, so hopefully we can achieve something.

Q: Pastor, obviously, like Kamui, it was a tough weekend for you in Australia. Not too many laps on the board. How much has the team been able to do in the time since then?

Pastor MALDONADO: The pre-season, it was quite tough for us. We've been working very hard and trying to push to solve all of the problems. These kind of problems, when you get at the bottom of the problem, you see that they are not huge problems: easy to fix but it took so much time from the test. In the first race again. So I think we miss free practice, even on Saturday, quali, so we've not been able to do proper long runs and to see our real potential of the car because of this kind of issues we've had. And now I hope to have a better weekend. We've been working hard again to try to improve. We improve quite a lot for the race. We had never been able to run for more than 10 laps together and during the race we did more than 30 laps with both cars - which is a step forward. Now we are fully focussed on finishing the race and I think if we finish the race we will be in a good position to fight for good places.

Q: From the running that you have done, what's the car telling you? What does it feel like? Are you optimistic about the potential of this car?

PM: It is very difficult to say, just because everything is new for us. We will need some more time in the car, especially to explore the potential of the car. It's very difficult to say. The feeling is not bad but against the other teams we need some more time in the track and try to do our best to catch them. I think it's going to be a very tough beginning of the season but again things are changing quickly in Formula One. We've been working very hard, the team is quite good on reacting and hopefully this race will be much better for us.

Q: Kimi, seventh in Australia and a bulletin from the Ferrari team since then with some quotes from you saying that one of the problems was the brake-by-wire system in particular. Would you give us a bit more detail on that?

Kimi RÄIKKÖNEN: ah, I don't know where that came from. It's not the issue. There is nothing wrong with the system. Somebody asked me after the race and I said 'it's not that' - because they kind of said 'is there some issue?' It's not true. But just mainly setup to get the car as I like it, as I wanted to have it and I'm sure once... we're making some stuff for me, so hopefully once we get those it will get a bit more easy to get a bit more feeling in the front end. But it will take a little while. Obviously not the ideal start for the year, for the team, not what we obviously want to achieve. We want to do much better results but after all the difficulties over the weekend and how difficult it was, how many areas, just the small things. At least we got something out and it's going to be a long year, so hopefully we can now build on it. We have plenty of good people and they're working flat out as a group to improve things. So, we still have things to do but I'm sure we can keep progressing.

Q: With the nature of this particular circuit, do you think that you and we will be able to see more of what this Ferrari car is capable of this weekend, perhaps than we did in Australia?

KR: I don't know. Every circuit is different. Obviously it is very hot, humid here, slightly different tyres here I think, so I have no idea. Even from the past years it was very difficult to say from race to race and especially with this new year with new rules. It will be hard but hopefully we get a bit better feeling and overall have a bit more experience and all the things run the weekend through a little bit more cleanly and hopefully get the better results.

Q: Nico, obviously the winner in Australia, your fourth career win. What's the reaction been like? What's the feedback been like? How have you spent the last ten days or so? Has it been more special than the other wins?

Nico ROSBERG: Well it's been a fantastic start to the season, definitely, yes. I think the whole team has done a great job with these new regulations, with the car and engine and powertrain that they've built and yes, it's been great to win the first race, for sure, fantastic. But now... went on holiday after that, so obviously the holiday was a little bit better, thanks to the win but now back to just fully focussed on getting the most out of this race.

Q: Obviously it's well-chronically that it was an eventful race for you here last year, particularly towards the end. Do you expect it to be another tight, close in-house battle this weekend?

NR: That would be a great thing. The chances are... yes, that we will be right at the front because it seems that we have a bit of an advantage over the other people. Of course Melbourne is not a benchmark, as a race, so we need to be a bit cautious with that but I think we're looking good, so for sure it will be possible to do a great result again here.

Q: (Kate Walker - crash.net) For all of you gentlemen: we've heard quite a lot of negative headlines, negative news reports about the new formula. I'd like to get some positive feedback from you on what these new cars are like to drive and how much fun they are to race.

DK: Well, it's quite popular to criticise Formula One nowadays, I think, and there is always some new technology coming and it has happened for me to debut in a new Formula One, let's say. It's quite interesting, I would say. The standard, with the new technology, has to change at some point and I think it's quite interesting. It's still fast, it's going to be faster all the time and we will see at the end of the year how much better it is or not, so it's early days.

KK: I think I definitely enjoy driving them because of course it's definitely not easy at the beginning but I remember there were quite similar headlines before, but after a few years or a few months everybody forgot, so I don't think it's a big problem. But for us we're still enjoying driving. It's more challenging to drive in dry races, so I'm pretty happy.

NR: I think it's been all good for F1. It's changed around the pecking order which is definitely good for everybody because the same guy winning last year... we needed a bit of a change to that, so that's been good. The cars are great to drive, that's fine, so I think it's all good.

KR: I don't think it's awfully different as a driver, to compare last year's cars to this year's. Obviously there are some small detailed issues but it's the bigger issues that make a difference for me, just to be in a different team. Every team feels a bit different, different cars. It doesn't really change an awful lot as a driver.

PM: To be honest, I don't have much to say, because I've not spent a lot of time in the car at the moment. It's quite early, but it doesn't feel a lot different to what we had in the past. For sure, it's a more complicated car, especially for the technicians, for the engineers in the paddock. For us, it's a bit easier on the steering wheel. It's a bit more complicated but it's what we have at the moment. It's the same for everyone.

Q: (Elmar Dreher - DPA) Nico, with a win here, you can equalise the five wins by your father. What does that mean for you, and how confident are you to win here?

NR: I understand that it's interesting to make comparisons and that, and even I find it interesting. After Australia, I read that he also won the first time... at the first Australian GP, 29 years ago. It's fun to read those things but I really don't think about that. I don't compare. I'm proud of what my father achieved but I'm just focused on my job and getting the most out of it and definitely, yes, I'm optimistic for the weekend and there is a possibility to win.

Q: (Adrian Rodriguez Huber - Agencia EFE) Kimi, how has your relationship with Fernando Alonso developed if it has, in any direction, since you guys have become teammates?

KR: It's good, it always been good. Now, obviously, it's early days but there was a lot of talk in the media from you guys, different people saying different things, but it's been good. But the team has been trying to improve things and get the team to where we want to be.

Q: (Heikki Kulta - Turun Sanomat) Kimi, did you have any temptation to go to drive the simulator to get better settings for you?

KR: No.

Q: (Flavio Vanetti – Corriere della Sera) Kimi, can we say that Ferrari will be more able to attack Mercedes and the other teams here?

KR: Like I said before, we don't know how it's going to be here. I would say it's a different circuit, it will be very hard for the cars, the heat. We have to wait and see how we can do. Obviously we learned quite a bit on things from the last race but then it's the same for every team. Hopefully we can be a bit more happy and see where we end up.

Q: (Abhishek Takle - Midday) To all of you: now that the first race is out of the way, do you have a fair idea of who stands where in the pecking order? Or given that Albert Park is a unique circuit, is it still very much a step into the unknown?

VB: I think we have some kind of idea where every team is. Of course, like Nico said before, Melbourne is maybe not the best benchmark, a little bit different track than most of the others. We will see here, and of course, all the teams are going to improve so much race by race, especially when we get to Europe. Some kind of idea but it can change.

Q: So where do you think you are? Second? Third fastest car?

VB: Somewhere there, hopefully. It's been a good start for us, hopefully we can maintain it because everyone is going to improve a lot, so I would definitely see no reason why we couldn't find four top six positions.

KR: I think we are more or less where we finished.

NR: I think we look to be the quickest at the moment which is fantastic but we need to be careful with that and the opposition is not asleep, they're pushing like crazy.

Q: Daniil, Toro Rosso got two cars into the top ten in qualifying and the race in Australia which they didn't do the whole of last year, so where does that put you in the pecking order at the moment?

DK: Well, I hope in the points quite consistently. It would be good for us. If then we can use the conditions to our best, then hopefully we can go as high as possible, it's always what we are fighting for and the higher the better.

Q: Pastor, hard to say?

PM: Yeah. No.

KK: Same. Sorry.
