



FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DE L'AUTOMOBILE

## 2011 ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX

### POST RACE PRESS CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPT

13.11.2011

**DRIVERS 1 - Lewis HAMILTON (McLaren)**

**2 - Fernando ALONSO (Ferrari)**

**3 - Jenson BUTTON (McLaren)**

#### TV UNILATERALS

**Q: Lewis, describe your feelings after this win. It is one for you mum, hey?**

**Lewis HAMILTON:** Yeah, absolutely. It's my mum's birthday this weekend and it is great to be able to win while she's here. I feel fantastic. I think it was one of my best races. I said that to myself as I slowed down, just being able to hold off one of the best drivers in the world throughout the race is something that is very, very tough to do. Just looking after the tyres, just managing the gap. Obviously the team did a fantastic job in the pit-stops, but I'm ecstatic. Really very happy to be back up here. This is great. I can get on my flight tonight and smile.

**Q: Fernando, there is a lot of respect between you two at the moment. You had a great start today, fifth up to second, and you almost got close enough to Lewis at the second round of stops.**

**Fernando ALONSO:** Yeah, it was a fantastic race for me as well with a very good start and then a good first lap fighting with Jenson. Obviously with the problem with Sebastian (Vettel) we found ourselves second and then we fight all through the race more or less in a distance of three to five seconds with Lewis. Then the last pit-stop we stayed two laps longer than the McLaren and we were close I think. But we had some traffic in the pit entry, behind one HRT, and I think we lost a little bit of ground. But, anyway, with the last stint I think they had a little bit more pace so even if we were able to overtake in the stop it was difficult to win the race so extremely happy with second and enjoy this weekend.

**Q: Jenson, a lot of battles with Mark Webber for you but it looked a bit uncomfortable and did you radio in that you had some KERS problems.**

**Jenson BUTTON:** Yeah, I did. I am not sure if my pace was entirely there on the soft tyres anyway. I think it was about lap 13 or 14. I didn't have any KERS basically. I had to fend off Webber and also (Felipe) Massa which is also quite interesting without KERS. Then in the next stint I was told what I could do to try and get KERS back, and at least we got it back, but it lasted for like two laps at a time and I had to keep resetting it. The problem is it is not just when you accelerate, it is when you brake. When you have KERS you have a lot of engine braking from the KERS and when you don't have it you don't have any braking performance. Every time I arrived at a corner I didn't know what I was going to get, either engine braking or not, so it was pretty tricky. But coming home and finishing third I am relatively happy.

**Q: Lewis, by your own admission it has been a tough few months. Does this win put you well and truly back on track do you think?**

**LH:** I don't know. It is early days yet but this is definitely the start of something hopefully very good. We've got another great race ahead of us in Brazil and I have just got to put my focus on that and try to keep the momentum, but you know how it goes. Anything can happen. I have just got to keep my mind on the game.

## **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Q: Lewis, what were your thoughts when you saw Sebastian go off?**

**LH:** I didn't know which way it was going to go, so I was just trying to avoid that. I saw immediately that something had happened to his tyre, and that's why he was going sideways. I was just making sure that I didn't collect him as he potentially [could come] across the track. After that, I just saw that I had two very quick drivers behind me and I was just trying to keep the gap. It didn't really enter my mind at all, throughout the race.

**Q: As you say you tried to keep the gap; that gap remained incredibly constant up to the first stint, and then a different gap again remained stable up to the second stop.**

**LH:** Yeah, I think it's very rare for us and for me to get the opportunity to be able to maintain a gap, to be able to control the race but today I had the pace, I was able to put in the laps when Fernando went quicker, and whenever he closed the gap, generally was able to keep it the same or pull out a little bit more. There was a point – I can't remember which stint it was – but he was closing the gap. It seemed like he would start a bit slower than me in a stint and then get faster towards the end, so his tyres would last longer but nonetheless, I'm very happy with how it went.

**Q: There were one or two penalties for backmarkers; was there a problem with backmarkers more here today than elsewhere?**

**LH:** Just to point out that backmarkers have a tough job, because firstly they're just looking ahead, they're competing for whatever position they're competing for and sometimes you just don't look in your mirrors and sometimes you're probably just not expecting to be lapped or when that's going to happen. I've been in that position before and I think some of them just didn't see because they were fighting the guys in front, but some of them were on their own and just stayed in front. I lost seconds behind certain different people, and I think Rubens overtook me with the DRS; there was nothing I could do about that. I came up back alongside him thinking 'dude, I'm in the lead, we're not racing'. He came and congratulated me afterwards so that's fine.

**Q: Fernando, tell us about that fantastic start.**

**FA:** I don't think it was so good. At the start, I think we lost a little bit of ground with Jenson, who was right in front of us in third, and we were fifth. Then we braked and we risked, on the outside of turn one, to overtake Mark, so we gained one position there. We gained one position with Sebastian's accident and then one position with the slipstream with Jenson. I think we've had better starts than today, the start itself.

**Q: Again, just to ask you about the gap to Lewis each time; I guess you were pushing as hard as you could.**

**FA:** Yeah, definitely. I think it was a time trial race, like an individual race, not against the time. I was doing like qualifying laps every lap, trying to close the gap, but one tenth up, one tenth down for the whole stint, as you said. I think we were dominated by people who were catching slower cars. When he [Hamilton] had some problems, I would maybe close the gap by like two seconds; when I had a problem, the gap increased by two seconds. We were dominated by how easy [it was to pass] or in which part of the track you caught a slow car.

**Q: What are your thoughts about the next race in Brazil?**

**FA:** I'm looking forward to it; it's the last race. To be honest, I already want to have the last the race and to think about 2012 as soon as possible, not to forget this year, because I think the year in

general has been quite good for the team and in general, with some good improvements from last year, but obviously we were not able to fight for the championship. We had only one victory this year so definitely next year is a big challenge for us, and a big motivation to do better than 2011. So looking at Brazil, I think the race there will be interesting. The weather is normally a little bit unpredictable, so anything can happen there and hopefully with a possibility to fight on the podium again.

**Q: Jenson, a good third place but were your worst fears about DRS confirmed or was it just compounded by the lack of KERS?**

**JB:** Yeah. DRS was actually quite good round here, which was a pity for me. I had a couple of good battles out there during the race but it was a lot more difficult by not having KERS for a lot of the race. We found a way of getting the KERS working again but the problem was it would only last for a couple of laps and then it would stop working and there was no warning to tell me it had stopped working so I would just lose all engine braking. It was pretty tricky, so to get to the end and be on the podium, I am pretty happy with that.

**Q: Were you surprised at Mark Webber's tactics?**

**JB:** Yes, very surprised. I don't know if they thought that I had the KERS problem for the rest of the race because when I had the KERS problem I was obviously a lot slower and he was pushing me around for 15 laps. As soon as I sorted the problem out, I would go half a second quicker. I don't know. It was a strange decision to make but they also made a mistake on the first pit stop, I think, which lost them a lot of ground. I think that really hurt him and he wasn't able to really challenge after that.

## **QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Q: (Frederic Ferret – L'Equipe) Lewis, how do you rate this victory after such a bad time?**

**LH:** I don't know. I've had some interesting victories, some better than others. When I was doing the lap on the way in, I was thinking that this was definitely one of my best, just in terms of my own performance, not making mistakes. I don't feel I've made a single mistake in the race and with the things that have gone, with the pressure that I've been under and with the doubt that has surrounded me, I felt just massively proud to have put that kind of performance together and to have come out on top. I think my fans have been incredibly supportive and so have my family, particularly more so in the recent weeks and so that's made a big difference. And it's my Mum's birthday, so it makes it even better.

**Q: (Livio Oricchio – O Estado de Sao Paulo) Fernando, after such a disappointing race here last year, does the performance make it anything special for you?**

**FA:** Well, not really. I don't think that we were thinking about last year when we came here. It doesn't change the feeling of last year when we lost the championship at the last moment to be on the podium today. As I said on Thursday, what makes this podium special is that I think I have 73 podiums now, so 73 trophies in Formula One. I have them from all the circuits that I have raced on in Formula One, so Magny-Cours, Indianapolis – circuits which we are not racing on now and I missed only one at home, and that was Abu Dhabi, because in the three years, I have never been on the podium. So now I have completed all the circuits. So, happy.

**Q: (Sudhir Chandran - Chequered Flag, India) Lewis, it seemed like that whole of Abu Dhabi was rooting for this win for you. Could you feel the energy and vibe in the crowd?**

**LH:** Definitely, definitely. When we were doing the parade lap before the race, I could see that there were a lot of fans, particularly from the UK but also from here in Abu Dhabi. I was really surprised to see so much support, but it's great. It's a great spectacle, a great circuit to come to and a great country. Hopefully, it was a good race to watch. Obviously for me it was probably not too exciting to watch me go round, but I don't mind having those races every now and then.

**Q: (Naoise Holohan – Manipe F1) Lewis, would it have made the victory any more special if you had beaten Sebastian on track rather than him retiring ?**

**LH:** I don't know really. I will tell you when it happens. I think we were clearly very quick and it would have been very close. Sebastian got a great start – again – and was off. From turn one he got quite a good exit from turn one so he had a pretty good gap already. Every now and then, we need a bit of bad luck to notice the good times, I guess, and I don't remember the last time he had a bit of bad luck.

**Q: (Sarah Holt – BBC Sport) Lewis, I just wondered if you felt that this was the first race weekend in a while when you felt like you've been able to get on top of your emotions and for them not to affect you when you've been in the car? Is that what has made the difference today?**

**LH:** I don't know. I definitely think that this weekend I've been clearer in my mind and I've had less weighing on me, less thoughts and issues or whatever problems that I've got. I was just able to drive clearly. I think my qualifying has always been generally good and my practice has always been pretty good but obviously in the last race I had that mistake which was... I was just not thinking straight and this weekend I was able to think straight. I don't know if that's because I had some great support here or what, but it's been a positive feeling all weekend. I felt like I was on it all weekend so I just feel very fortunate to have come out and finish and had the car last and not get into any trouble.

**Q: (Michael Schmidt – Auto, Motor und Sport) Lewis, how much could you see of Sebastian's accident. Is it possible that he was maybe too high on the kerb with a full fuel load, which maybe damaged the tyre?**

**LH:** I could see he went through turn two and it looked like his rear tyre failed for whatever reason. He wasn't on the kerb as far as I could see. I only saw it happen after the kerb, so after the apex, but I just saw that his tyre was deflated and the right rear was squashed up on the inside of the floor and everything, so I assumed it was just a tyre failure.

**Q: (Kate Walker – Girl Racer) Fernando, could you please tell us what was going through your head in the second pit stop when you followed the HRT into the pits? Did you see possible victory slipping from your sights?**

**FA:** We knew that maybe we could overtake the McLaren at the second stop, because when we saw Lewis pitting, we had the tyres in more or less good condition to push for another two or three laps, so we did some good timed laps, so the team was informing me that we should be OK maybe to exit in front of him or maybe on the limit, very close. But even with that, I knew that with 15 laps remaining, with the medium tyres, it was really difficult to stay in front of Lewis. Definitely, with the traffic on the pit entry, maybe we lost the opportunity to be close at the exit of the pits but I don't think that we lost the victory there. It was extremely difficult to beat the McLaren today.

**Q: (Naoise Holohan – Manipe F1) Jenson, you're visiting Ireland next summer for the Dublin F1 street demo on June 3. Are you looking forward to the trip and have you any sightseeing planned? A few pints of Guinness perhaps?**

**JB:** Wow, I normally don't plan that far ahead. I'm glad. I actually did know I was going. Yeah, I'm looking forward to it. It's a fun city, I've been there a few times before and always had a good time. Yeah, looking forward to the experience, and hopefully [I'll] have a lot of support there. Looking at all the Tweets that I've had about it, there's a lot of interest so I'm looking forward to it.

**LH:** Are you going to keep your moustache for that?

**JB:** I'm not sure actually. My missus likes it so I might just carry it. I've got to shave it off tomorrow or else I might stick it to something so I can put it back on. It takes me a while to grow it.

Ends