

Saturday 28 June 1997

Pole winner's conference

1. Michael Schumacher (Ferrari), 1m 14.548s; 2. Heinz-Harald Frentzen (Williams-Renault), 1m 14.749s; 3. Ralf Schumacher (Jordan-Peugeot), 1m 18.388s

Congratulations, Michael, on your second consecutive pole position. You have said that you did not expect to be quick here, and that you did not wish the weather to be dry. Have you now changed your mind about that?

MS: I have definitely been surprised. Something which we didn't do before coming here was to test this new front wing. We just stuck it on the car -- and I honestly don't know how much time it is worth. It WILL give something, but I don't know how much. All the testing we did here was done under the same circumstances as now -- and I was so far off the pace [last week] that I was struggling to do a 1m 15.6s. Now I have done a 1m 14.6s -- a whole second faster -- and I have no explanation for it. But obviously I will take it ...

Q. Does the car feel much better anywhere?

MS: I was struggling with understeer in the long section -- the first two corners -- and that is where I was losing most of my time. When I was on a good lap, just once the car felt fairly good through those corners, but then I had a problem in the last corner because by that stage I should have improved my time. But the car is not too good, particularly in those first two corners, although it was fairly good through the infield.

Q. How has the handling improved since the tests?

MS: Probably it is because we are running so much more wing than the others. Our top speed is down, which helps to give more grip in the infield, but even with all of that I did not expect to be where we are.

Q. Under race conditions in the last two GPs you have been better than the Williams ...

MS: Sure, but I can only speak from my experiences in the tests here -- and they were bad. So ... I don't know what to say. We have to wait and see about the weather, but I think we are going to struggle tomorrow.

Q. Heinz-Harald, did you notice the track getting slower at the end?

HF: Not for us. Everyone went out at the beginning to take advantage of the low track temperatures, but the temperature came down again towards the end. I think conditions were more or less constant.

Q. What were the problems you had this afternoon?

HHF: Comparing qualifying with this morning's session, in my opinion we lost some grip: I could not feel as much traction as I did this morning. Even though the temperature was higher this afternoon, it was not something that I expected. The balance was quite similar, but I was quite surprised when I saw Michael's time through the midsection because although we ran quite low downforce, we should have been faster there. For some time I was struggling to find time there and I only improved at the end by using more wing to give more traction. I still don't know how much it helped.

Q. Is that a problem with both cars in the team?

HHF: I haven't yet spoken to Jacques, but apparently he wasn't too happy with the T-car which he had to use after the crash this morning. He wasn't happy with the T-car and the mechanics didn't get his race car ready for him until near the end of the afternoon. He jumped over to it and may have improved his times.

Q. How do you feel about the car under race conditions?

HHF: Actually I don't know. Michael is always saying that he is struggling a lot and then in the races he is out in front! That's a good way to keep the pressure away. So let me just say that we will probably be struggling in the race tomorrow ...

Q. Ralf, it seems you were lucky to have been fast in the early stages of qualifying because the final runs were difficult. Tell us about it ...

RS: I wasn't exactly lucky. The first time I went out I was held up by Fontana. The second attempt was good and produced my lap time. Then the third time we tested something that didn't work out and I spun at the hairpin. On the fourth set of tyres I was held up by Katayama: I would not have improved my time on that run anyway, but it is always a shame to be held up and to have your chances destroyed. I think we should all look more closely at our mirrors.

Q. You were not happy with the behaviour of your car yesterday and this morning. What was wrong with it?

MS: The worst thing was having to spend so much time in the pits. We had a problem this morning with the hydraulic system and I only did 14 laps, most of which were IN or OUT laps. So far the car's handling is quite K. We will see how it is with full fuel tomorrow. Heinz-Harald may be right about my brother's predictions and perhaps I should also say that we will be struggling in the race!