

F1 Canadian Grand Prix 2026 Race Day: Russell Bids For Montreal Glory From Pole

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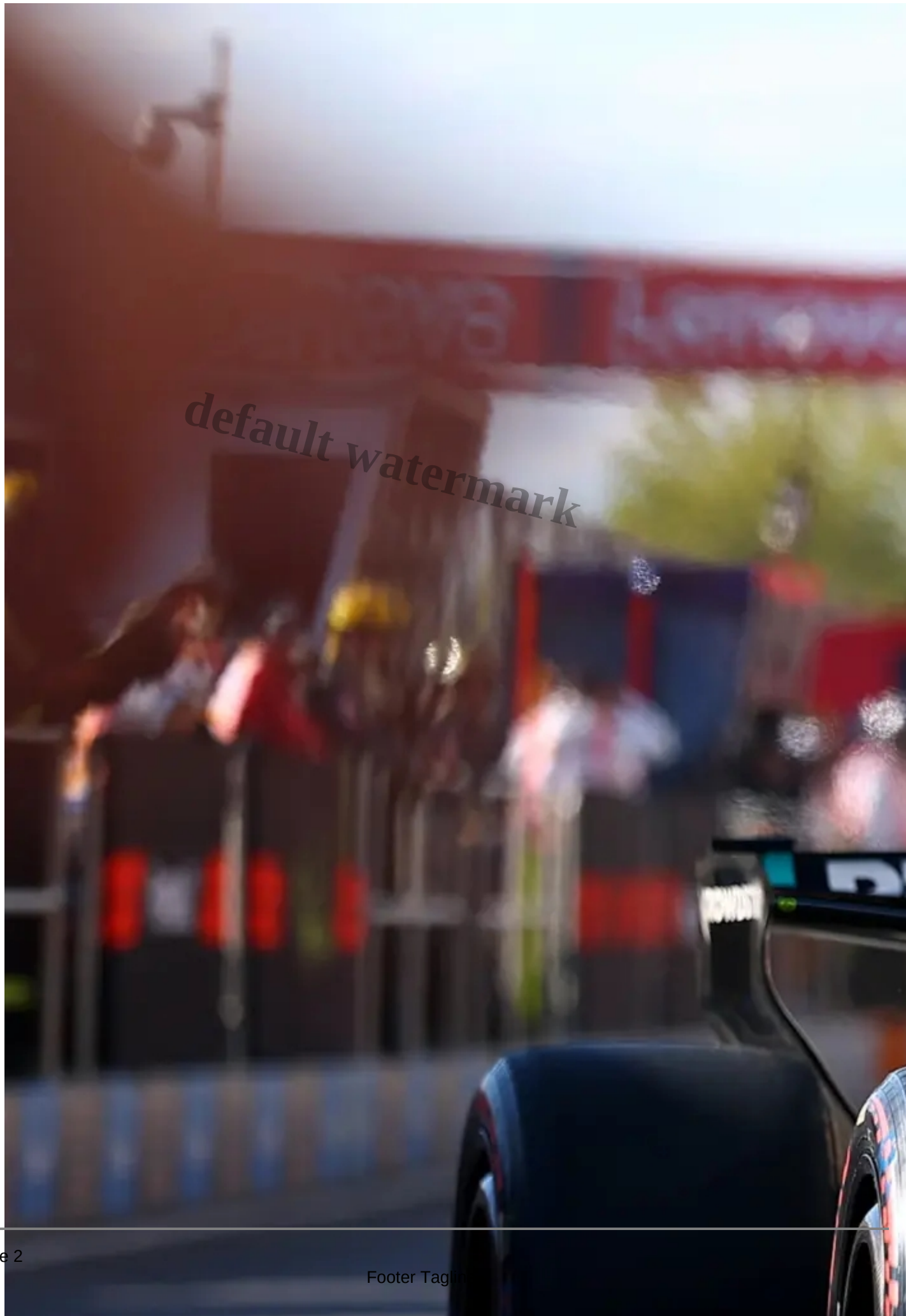
It is race day at the Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve in Montreal, and the **F1 Canadian Grand Prix 2026** is set to be one of the most compelling races of the season so far. George Russell lines up on pole position after a dominant qualifying performance that sent a clear signal: Mercedes are back in the mix. With the McLaren title rivals behind him and a fired-up pack poised to attack at one of Formula 1â??s most unpredictable street circuits, this afternoon in Montreal promises fireworks.

F1 Canadian Grand Prix 2026: Qualifying Grid and Race Preview

Russell earned his third consecutive Montreal pole on Saturday evening, setting a stunning lap of 1m 12.578s to edge teammate Kimi Antonelli by just 0.068s. McLarenâ??s Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri occupy the second row, while seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton qualified fifth in the Ferrari and Max Verstappen â?? whose Red Bull was plagued by bouncing all weekend â?? starts sixth.

The sprint race on Saturday saw Russell win after a fierce battle with Antonelli, with the young Italian having to settle for second. Norris was third in the Sprint â?? a â??very good resultâ?• in his own words â?? but Sundayâ??s full race will be a different proposition entirely. Seventy laps around the Wall of Champions, heavy braking, and aggressive DRS zones make this a circuit where positions change fast.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George Russell on his way to pole at the 2026 F1 Canadian Grand Prix. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Championship Battle: Can Norris and Piastri Close the Gap?

The 2026 driversâ?? championship has been a fascinating four-way narrative between the Mercedes pair and the McLarens. Antonelli currently leads the standings, with the Canadian weekend offering both Russell and the McLaren drivers a chance to shake things up. Verstappen, meanwhile, finds himself further adrift than Red Bull would like â?? his Montreal bounce issues symptomatic of a season in which the RB21 has struggled for consistency under the new regulations.

For Russell, this race is personal. After a difficult Miami Grand Prix, the Briton was emphatic on Friday: â??Miami was obviously a bit unique. This is an amazing circuit â?? high-grip, feels like youâ??re driving a proper Formula 1 car.â?• He backed those words up by going fastest in every session bar practice, and arrives at race start with enormous momentum.

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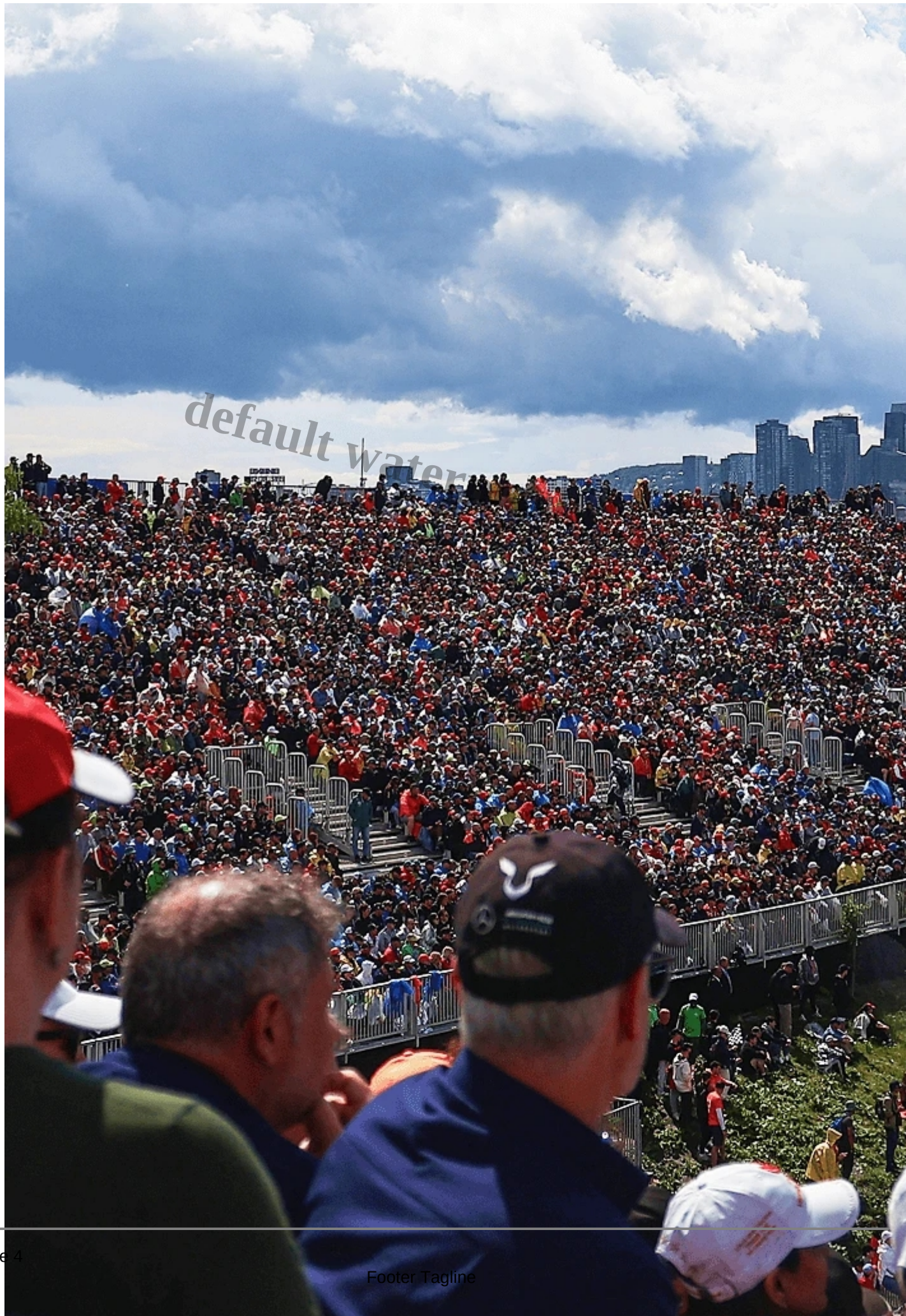
Circuit Guide: Why Montreal Always Delivers Drama

The Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve is beloved for good reason. Created on the man-made Notre Dame Island in the middle of the St Lawrence River for the 1967 Expo, it has hosted the Canadian Grand Prix since 1978 â?? the year a certain Gilles Villeneuve took his maiden victory on home soil. The circuitâ??s signature feature remains the Wall of Champions at the final chicane, a concrete barrier that has ended races and championships in equal measure.

For overtaking, the hairpin section surrounded by Grandstands 15, 21, and 24 offers the best action. Hamilton, starting fifth, is typically magnificent in Montreal; watch for him to push for the podium. Verstappen in sixth will also be determined after a frustrating week.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The Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve â?? Montrealâ??s legendary Formula 1 venue. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Key Storylines to Watch in the Race

Beyond the title battle, several intriguing sub-plots add spice to the 2026 Canadian Grand Prix. Antonelli, the teenage Italian who has been the revelation of the season, faces the pressure of defending his points lead under real race conditions. Piastri â?? who McLaren principal Andrea Stella firmly denied is bound for Red Bull despite silly-season whispers â?? will be eager to prove his calibre from fourth. And Hamilton, returning to a track where he has won seven times, will be channelling all of his experience around the streets of Montreal.

Safety car probability is high at this circuit. That factor alone could scramble strategy and reshuffle the podium. Teams will need to react quickly to VSC and SC windows to gain advantage.

The race starts at 20:00 local time (08:00 SGT Monday 25 May 2026). Follow all the action live on F1 TV and your local broadcast partner. For more on the build-up to this race weekend, see our earlier coverage of the Canadian GP sprint qualifying report and the race week preview. All the latest from motorsport and beyond is in our Sports section.

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Author
jadeyeo