

Kimi Antonelli World Champion: Inside a Record F1 Title

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Kimi Antonelli world champion is a phrase that sounds unreal even now. The Mercedes driver became the youngest title winner in Formula 1 history in Mexico City, aged just 20 and only in his second season. Here is how he did it.

Kimi Antonelli world champion: a record that may never fall

Antonelli took the youngest-champion record from four-time winner Sebastian Vettel by more than three years, and Formula 1â??s own writers say it may never be beaten. The clincher came in Mexico City, where he finished on the podium alongside Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton. By his own admission he was tense all weekend, and he had to back off on the final lap because of tears.

Those emotions were understandable. Mercedes had planned to hand him a title-contending car in 2027, but offered it a year early, and he repaid that faith in full.



Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

From a tough rookie year to nine Grand Prix wins

It was not always smooth. In 2025 he made three podiums but scored only one point across the entire European leg, and team boss Toto Wolff called his display at Monza underwhelming. Antonelli shrugged it off, leaning on his family and trusted Mercedes colleagues, and then worked relentlessly through the winter.

The 2026 reward is nine Grand Prix wins, including a stunning charge from P19 to victory at Monza in front of his home crowd and another win at Austin. Singapore fans remember the middle of that run well: after Marina Bay, we reported that Verstappen won the race while Antonelli went 102 points clear, as covered in Verstappen wins the Singapore Grand Prix.

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Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Beating a seasoned team-mate

The most impressive part may be that Antonelli beat George Russell, a more experienced team-mate who was widely tipped to win the title. Writer Chris Medland admitted he expected inconsistency and a Russell title, but praised how Antonelli handled pressure. He added that the Italian was cautious in early wheel-to-wheel fights, such as the Canada sprint, then pushed a little harder once he knew where the limits were.

Race engineer Peter Bonnington has even said Antonelli can match the likes of Hamilton and Michael Schumacher, given his ability. Praise does not get much higher than that, though it depends on Mercedes giving him another title-capable car.

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Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

What the paddock says about Antonelli

Lawrence Barretto first spent proper time with Antonelli at Monza in 2024, a day after the teenager crashed on his FP1 debut. He recalled that you would never have known it: Antonelli had already addressed the crash, learned from it and compartmentalised it. That mental strength, Barretto argues, is what carried him through a rollercoaster rookie campaign.

James Hinchcliffe, the IndyCar race winner and analyst, called it no flash in the pan. Yes, the Mercedes began the year as the dominant package, but Antonelli still had to out-qualify, out-race and outperform a team-mate who had gone toe-to-toe with Hamilton. That took good decision-making and exceptional race craft, not just raw speed, and it is why this title looks more like a beginning than a peak.

Medland pointed out one quirk of the season: Antonelli was rarely tested in a truly high-pressure title fight or in many intense wheel-to-wheel duels, which is exactly why the prospect of seeing him in both next year is so exciting. That is also where the real examination of his talent will begin.

Mercedesâ?? double and what comes next

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Antonelliâ??s title arrived alongside Mercedesâ?? constructorsâ?? crown, which was sealed in Brazil, as we told in Sao Paulo Grand Prix 2026. Lando Norris won that wet Sao Paulo race, and the sport already looks ahead to a 2027 battle between Antonelli, Verstappen, Hamilton and Norris, all champions in different teams. Elsewhere in the paddock, Oscar Piastriâ??s management split shows how much is happening away from the track too.

The challenge is staying there. Writers at Formula 1 argue that this feels like the start of something special, but the new generation of cars has levelled the field, and he will be the hunted next year rather than the hunter. For now, the Italian has earned his moment. Follow all our motorsport and football coverage in the Sports category archive.

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