

Las Vegas GP race: Verstappen wins a 35-lead-change thriller as Russell crashes and Ferrari collide again

Description

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The Las Vegas GP race was the best of the Formula 1 season so far, and Max Verstappen came out on top. The Red Bull driver won a 50-lap slipstreaming thriller that featured 35 changes of lead, with lights out at noon on Sunday in Singapore.



Max Verstappen takes the chequered flag. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Las Vegas GP race: Verstappen holds on

Verstappen started on pole after Kimi Antonelliâ??s grid penalty, and he made a good getaway. George Russell stayed on his tail, and what followed was a nearly race-long scrap for the lead. Each time Russell found a way by, Verstappen soon had an answer.

The Dutchman was worried he might miss out on the final lap, because he usually reclaimed the lead into turn one rather than before the finish line. Antonelli, who started sixth, joined the fight too. By the

flag it was Verstappenâ??s fourth win of the season, his 75th career victory and his third in Las Vegas. He called the lead changes â??surrealâ?•, and few could argue.

Mercedes lose it late

Mercedes looked like winners for much of the night. Then it fell apart. With three laps left, Russell tried to retake second from Antonelli, locked up at turn five and hit the barrier. He recovered to finish ninth.



George Russell. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Antonelli then suffered a power issue at the start of the final lap, and both McLarens swept past him. He finished fourth. There was already tension between Russell and Verstappen after an FP3 incident that

earned the Red Bull driver a warning, and after the race Verstappen said Russell was â??so far below my levelâ?•. The rivalry is clearly not going away. If you missed Fridayâ??s drama, our report on Las Vegas GP qualifying explains how the grid was set.

McLarenâ??s double podium

This was a strong night for McLaren. Lando Norris started third, slipped as far back as 11th with battery and straight-line speed problems, then recovered after the Safety Car to finish second. Oscar Piastri started 17th after a 10-place grid penalty and gained 14 places, his biggest career comeback, for his first podium since Miami in May.

It was only the teamâ??s second double podium of the year, and it leaves McLaren nine points behind Red Bull in the fight for third in the constructorsâ?? standings with two rounds remaining. Piastri called it exactly the kind of result his team needed.

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Close racing on the Las Vegas Strip Circuit. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Ferrari collide again

Ferrari had a weekend to forget. Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton qualified 11th and 12th, and in the second half of the race they touched again while fighting for sixth. Leclerc tried an overtake into turn seven and spun Hamilton around. The stewards blamed Leclerc and gave him a 10-second penalty, which left him tenth. Hamilton, who had also served a 10-second penalty for leaving the track against Norris, recovered to finish seventh.

Team principal Fred Vasseur called it unacceptable after the team had already spoken to its drivers following the clash in Mexico City. Leclerc admitted he would accept the blame and felt embarrassed for the team. It is the second time in a few weeks that Ferrariâ??s drivers have cost themselves points.

Off the track there was no shortage of glamour. Hannah Waddingham, Gordon Ramsay and Terry Crews drove LEGO cars around the circuit before the start, and Keanu Reeves chauffeured the top three to their post-race interviews in a special limousine. The Strip delivered the sort of spectacle the sport loves.

Palmowski ends the season on top

There was good news in the support races too. Alisha Palmowski had already clinched the F1 Academy title, but she still won the final feature race in Las Vegas, her sixth win of the season, and finished 75 points clear. Alba Larsen was second and Nina Gademan third.

What it means for the final rounds

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The championship picture behind Verstappen is tight, and the battle between McLaren and Red Bull for third in the teamsâ?? standings is now only nine points apart.

Verstappenâ??s win will not turn his season around, but it is a reminder of what Red Bull can do on a power-sensitive track. With two races left, the fight behind the leaders is wide open, and Mercedes will be left wondering what might have been. For more motorsport and football coverage, visit the Little Big Red Dot Sports section, including our weekend report on Chelsea 1-4 Leeds.

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