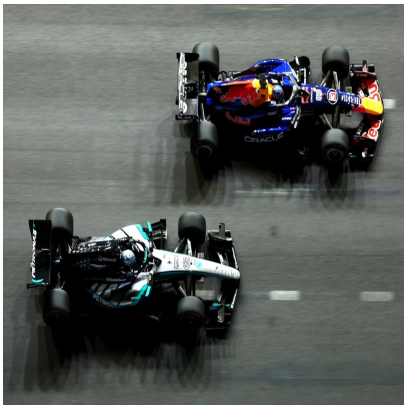

Qatar Grand Prix 2026: Verstappen Targets Runner-Up Spot

Description

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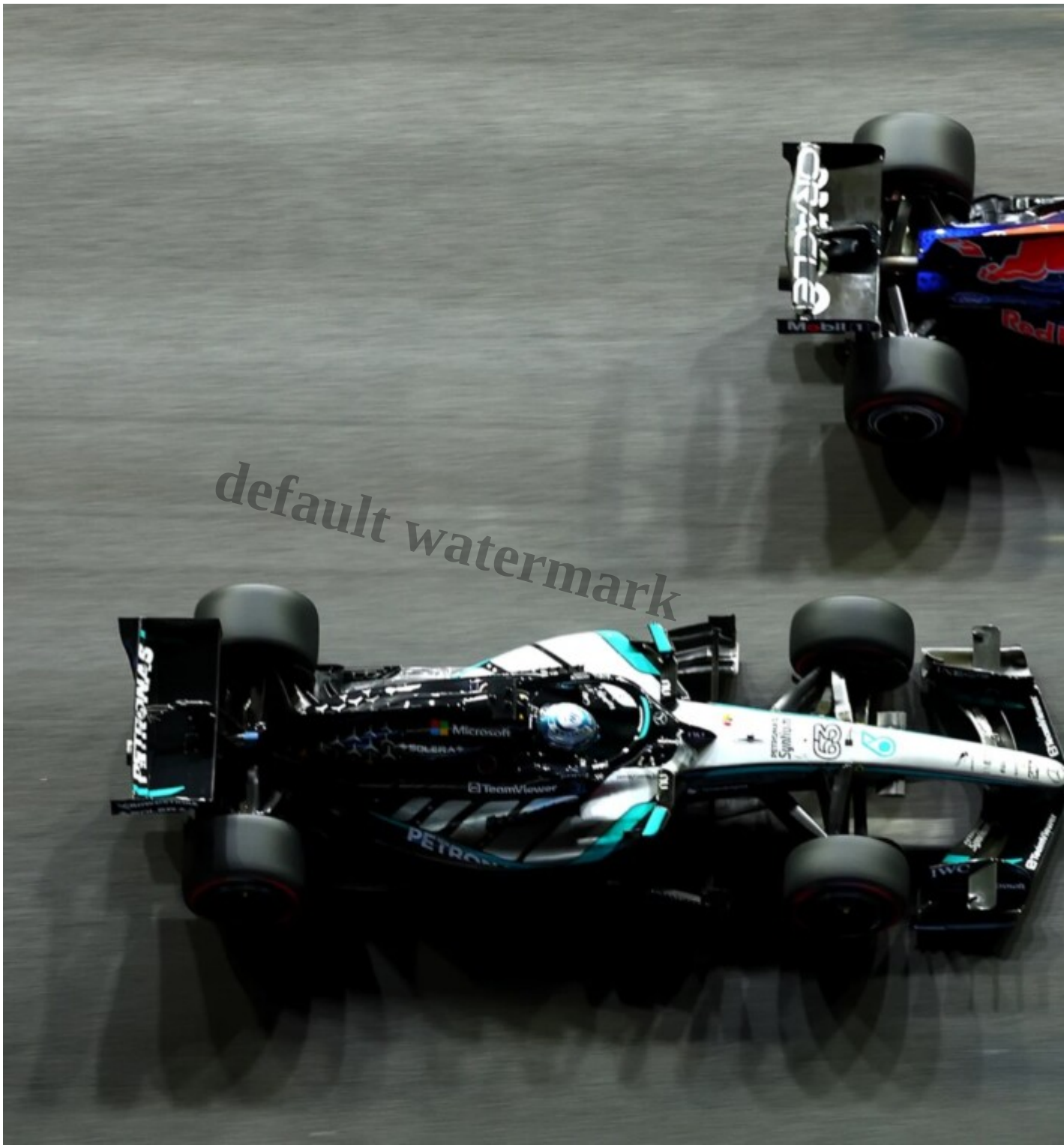
The Qatar Grand Prix on 29 November has no world title left to give, yet it still carries real stakes. Kimi Antonelli is already champion, so the fight is for second place, and Max Verstappen can seal it at Lusail. Singapore fans will be watching in the small hours.

Qatar Grand Prix: the title is gone, the runner-up spot is not

Antonelli wrapped up his first crown in Mexico City, and Mercedes took the constructorsâ?? championship too. He leads the standings on 402 points. Behind him the picture is far tighter, according to the official Formula 1 standings:

- Max Verstappen (Red Bull): 304 points
- Lewis Hamilton (Ferrari): 267 points
- George Russell (Mercedes): 264 points
- Lando Norris (McLaren): 264 points
- Charles Leclerc (Ferrari): 250 points

Verstappen won in Las Vegas for the fourth time in six races and has stood on the podium nine races in a row. He leads Hamilton by 37 points and Russell and Norris by 40, with only two rounds left. Our Las Vegas GP race report covers how he held off a 35-lead-change thriller.



Max Verstappen and George Russell fight for the lead in Las Vegas. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

How Verstappen can clinch second

Only 50 points remain across Qatar and the Abu Dhabi finale, because there is no sprint this weekend. If Verstappen leaves Lusail more than 25 points clear of every rival, nobody can catch him. A big

Hamilton result with a poor Verstappen finish would push it to Abu Dhabi. Russell, Norris and Leclerc all still have to chase.

Verstappenâ??s Lusail record

If form counts, Red Bull have the edge. Verstappen has won the last three Qatar races, in 2023, 2024 and 2025. Last year he converted third on the grid into victory after McLaren elected not to pit under the Safety Car. Hamilton, in 2021, is the only other current driver to have won here.

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Verstappen won the 2025 race at Lusail. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Lusail is a fast, flowing 5.419km circuit with 57 laps and a race distance of 308.611km. The lap record is Norrisâ??s 1:22.384, set in 2024. Over one kilometre of the lap is main straight, so Turn 1 offers a rare overtaking chance. Tyres will decide plenty. Formula 1 reports that Pirelli has again capped each set at 27 laps, which forces extra stops for anyone who struggles with wear. Temperatures should sit

between 27C and 29C, with the calmest conditions expected on race day.

Who else to watch in Qatar

Norris has finished in the top two in back-to-back races, at Sao Paulo and Las Vegas. In Nevada he slid as far back as 11th with battery and straight-line speed issues, then recovered after the Safety Car to take second. Oscar Piastri started 17th after a 10-place grid penalty and climbed to third, his first podium since Miami in May. He has been on the podium in Qatar in each of the last three years.

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The Las Vegas Grand Prix podium. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Russell is the driver under most pressure. He has gone six races without a podium, and a late lock-up in Las Vegas dropped him from a podium place to ninth. Ferrariâ??s weekend was worse still. Hamilton and Leclerc missed Q3, both took 10-second penalties, and the pair touched again, a repeat of the Mexico City clash. Team principal Fred Vasseur called it unacceptable.

Carlos Sainz is another one to note. He has scored in three of the four Qatar races, including a podium for Williams last year, and he rewarded Williams with points in Las Vegas after starting 20th.

Constructorsâ?? battle behind Mercedes

Mercedes sit on 666 points, with Ferrari second on 517. The real scrap is for third. Red Bull have 440 and McLaren 431, so just nine points separate them. A repeat of McLarenâ??s Las Vegas double podium would swing things quickly, and that was only the teamâ??s second double podium of the year.

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A McLaren chases a Ferrari in Las Vegas. Source: Formula 1 official website (formula1.com)

Qatar Grand Prix times in Singapore

The Lusail weekend lands at awkward hours for Singapore viewers. All times below are SGT, converted from the official schedule on formula1.com:

- Practice 1: Friday 27 November, 9.30pm
- Practice 2: Saturday 28 November, 1am
- Practice 3: Saturday 28 November, 10.30pm
- Qualifying: Sunday 29 November, 2am
- Race: Monday 30 November, midnight (Sunday night)

If you missed how the grid looked a week ago, our Las Vegas GP qualifying report explains the penalties that shaped it. For more local and international coverage, browse the LBRD Sports section.

What to expect at Lusail

Antonelli has nothing to prove, which could make him dangerous. Verstappen has momentum, a track record and a nine-race podium streak. Hamilton, Russell and Norris need results immediately. With the pressure off at the front and tight margins behind, Sunday nightâ??s race could be one of the most competitive of the final stretch.

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Date Created
24/11/2026
Author
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