

Vettel on pole in Budapest as Ferrari lockout front row



German Formula One driver Sebastian Vettel of Scuderia Ferrari, (left), and his first runner-up teammate Finnish Formula One driver Kimi Raikkonen of Scuderia Ferrari are seen after Vettel took the pole position during the qualifying session at Hungaroring circuit in Mogyorod, 23 kms north-east of Budapest, Hungary on July 29. The Hungarian Formula One Grand Prix will be held on July 30. (AP)

Hungarian GP Starting Grid

BUDAPEST, July 29, (RTRS): Starting grid from the Formula One Hungarian Grand Prix at Hungaroring on Sunday

1. Sebastian Vettel (Germany) Ferrari
2. Kimi Raikkonen (Finland) Ferrari
3. Valtteri Bottas (Finland) Mercedes
4. Lewis Hamilton (Britain) Mercedes
5. Max Verstappen (Netherlands) Red Bull - TAG Heuer
6. Daniel Ricciardo (Australia) Red Bull - TAG Heuer
7. Fernando Alonso (Spain) McLaren
8. Stoffel Vandoorne (Belgium) McLaren
9. Carlos Sainz Jr (Spain) Toro Rosso - Renault
10. Jolyon Palmer (Britain) Renault

11. Esteban Ocon (France) Force India - Mercedes
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Germany) Renault
13. Daniil Kvyat (Russia) Toro Rosso - Renault
14. Sergio Perez (Mexico) Force India - Mercedes
15. Romain Grosjean (France) Haas - Ferrari
16. Kevin Magnussen (Denmark) Haas - Ferrari
17. Lance Stroll (Canada) Williams-Mercedes
18. Pascal Wehrlein (Germany) Sauber - Ferrari
19. Paul Di Resta (Britain) Williams-Mercedes

'China long term play for F1'

BUDAPEST, July 29, (RTRS): Formula One views China as a long-term play and a second grand prix in the nation of 1.3 billion people remains years away, according to the sport's chairman and chief executive Chase Carey.

"China is a little bit like the US — two enormous markets. It will clearly take time," the American told Reuters at the Hungarian Grand Prix.

"They are markets that will probably be important to Formula One in a five to 10 year timeframe, not a three-year timeframe," he added.

China has had a grand prix in Shanghai since 2004 but the contract is up for renewal and next year's race has an asterisk against it along with Singapore's round, which is also subject to confirmation.

Carey said he was having 'good conversations' with organisers of both races.

While negotiations continue, there has also been talk of China eventually hosting a second race along with expansion in the United States.

McLaren executive director Zak Brown said earlier in July that Formula One needed two rounds in China and suggested one should be on a street circuit to bring racing closer to the people.

Formula One has also announced a deal with marketing agency Lagardere Sports to build strategic partnerships in China from 2018.

Andrew Georgiou, chief executive of Lagardere Sports and Entertainment, told Reuters in March that the growth of the Chinese middle classes could see 400 million people over the next 12 or 13 years having disposable income to spend on entertainment and lifestyle.

Carey said it was important to have a partner that understood the market and helped lay the groundwork for Formula One by building an audience through television, digital media, exhibitions and events.

"I think it's much more holistic than 'is it one or two races?'. I think that's

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putting the cart before the horse," said the American.

"It starts with 'what are the right relationships to have to develop the Chinese market and with them develop the extensions and capability to connect with the marketplace and Chinese fans in the right way?'"

"Could you have a second race? Yes. But those are discussions to be had down the road."

Carey said the focus over the next six months would be on developing a strategy for growing the sport.

"The technology in our sport and the stars make it a great sport to resonate with the Chinese partner, we just need to build the platforms to connect with them in the right way," he said.

No record for Hamilton

BUDAPEST, July 29, (AFP): Championship leader Sebastian Vettel grabbed pole position for Sunday's Hungarian Grand Prix as Ferrari locked out the front row of the grid in a tense, dramatic and record-breaking qualifying session on Saturday.

The 30-year-old four-time champion clocked a best lap of one minute 16.276 seconds to secure his third pole at the Hungaroring circuit and the 48th of his career.

His success gives him a perfect opportunity to make the most of

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the prime starting position and increase his one point lead over Lewis Hamilton in the standings.

"Yes, yes, grazie tutti (thanks everyone)," screamed German Vettel on his slowdown lap. "The car has been incredible today and I love this track. Front row for us is incredible."

"We're working hard. It is just great. Obviously, the last race wasn't great for us, but we are here now and I am happy where we are as a team."

His Ferrari team-mate Kimi Raikkonen was second fastest and will start alongside Vettel at the front of the grid ahead of the two Mercedes led by Valtteri Bottas, who was third, and three-time champion Briton Hamilton.

Hamilton said he was not surprised by Ferrari's overnight leap in performance.

"They were always going to be quick here and I was reasonably satisfied with our performance. I



British Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes steers his car ahead of Swedish Formula One driver Marcus Ericsson of Sauber during the third free practice session on the Hungaroring circuit in Mogyorod, 23 kms north-east of Budapest, Hungary on July 29. The Hungarian Formula One Grand Prix will be held on July 30. (AP)

thought we did quite well, except in Q3, for me," he said. "But you can't overtake here and it will be a train unless we can do something on the strategy."

Dutchman Max Verstappen was fifth for Red Bull ahead of his Australian team-mate Daniel Ricciardo, with German Nico Hulkenberg seventh for Renault and two-time champion Spaniard Fernando Alonso eighth for McLaren-Honda on his 36th birthday.

On a hot day at the Hungaroring, with an air temperature of 28 degrees and a track temperature of 57, the session began with a fiercely-competitive opening section in which Briton Paul di Resta, Williams's reserve driver, made his first appearance at a Grand Prix since 2013 as replacement for the unwell Brazilian Felipe Massa.

It was a tough return for the Scot and, despite a valiant effort, he

was eliminated in 19th place along with Dane Kevin Magnussen of Haas, his Williams team-mate Lance Stroll and the two Saubers of German Pascal Wehrlein and Swede Marcus Ericsson.

Vettel topped the times, but the chasing pack, led by Verstappen, were closer at that stage than in the final practice, with Raikkonen third ahead of Hamilton.

Vettel, Hamilton and Bottas were the first out for Q2, the Englishman reporting "there's a bit of vibration on these tyres" as he rejoined the fray in pursuit of a place in the top 10 shootout.

The German maintained his narrow advantage after the first flying runs ahead of Verstappen and Hamilton, who then responded with a new track record lap of 1:16.693 to go top as Vettel, Verstappen and Raikkonen stayed in the pits.

In a final flurry of Q2 action, Spaniard Carlos Sainz squeezed through in 10th for Toro Rosso, pushing Briton Jolyon Palmer of Renault out of the final session.

On the opening Q3 laps, Hamilton went off at Turn Four and chose to abort the lap, pulling into the pits. Bottas clocked 1:16.631 and then Vettel raised the record bar again to 1:16.276.

Surprisingly, given his earlier grumbles about the tyres and his "off" in Q2, Hamilton was soon out for his final run.

"Big vibration on these tyres," he said, again, as he launched his first flying lap.

But it was in vain as Vettel took pole from Raikkonen, who produced a scorching final lap to snatch second from his Finnish compatriot Bottas.

48 players used during 14-game unbeaten run

Half of US roster could change for World Cup

NEW YORK, July 29, (AP): US coach Bruce Arena has used 48 players during a 14-game unbeaten streak since replacing Jurgen Klinsmann last November, including seven who made their national team debuts.

There could be many fresh faces for next year's World Cup, led by teenager star Christian Pulisic. Arena's roster projects to include only about half the players who made the trip to Brazil in 2014.

Arena redefined roles for Clint Dempsey, Michael Bradley and Fabian Johnson, and elevated Jorge Villafana, Kellyn Acosta and Darlington Nagbe on the depth chart. With 10 months left, Arena's process to select his 23 World Cup players has become clear.

"We've made progress, but we have a long way to go,"

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Arena said after the Americans beat Jamaica in the CONCACAF Gold Cup final on Wednesday night. "Doing this well past midstream I found to be a difficult challenge."

Bradley has been dropped into a deeper defensive midfield role, while Johnson has been established in wide midfield instead of his repeated shuttling between there and the back line. Dempsey, back from heart procedures at age 34, has been transitioned from a regular to a spot starter and second-half substitute.

"Clint has been fantastic in the role we gave him the last two games," Arena said.

The coach gave Villafana his international debut, and the 27-year-old has become the first-choice left back. Acosta has seen substantial playing time in defensive midfield. And after getting dropped by Klinsmann, Nagbe has returned and earned Arena's praise for his play on the midfield flanks and in the center.

"He never loses the ball," Arena said. "We want to get him a little bit more assertive in the final third of the field."

Arena used 27 of 29 players on his Gold Cup roster, experimenting in the group stage and using a B-plus team in the last two games, when he started the same lineup for the first time in 11 matches since his return.

After an 0-2 start in the final round of World Cup qualifying, the Americans are third in the six-nation round and appear on track to qualify for an eighth straight World Cup. Qualifying resumes Sept 1 against Costa Rica at Harrison, New Jersey, and selection of a World Cup roster is about 10 months away.



Jordan Morris (right) of the USA celebrates scoring a goal against Jamaica during the final football game of the 2017 CONCACAF Gold Cup at the Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California on July 26. (AFP)

Bob Bradley stepped onto the dusty concrete roof deck of the Banc of California Stadium and marveled for a long moment at the sweeping view of downtown Los Angeles in the summer sunshine.

Los Angeles Football Club's stadium will be finished in the spring, and Bradley will lead the MLS expansion franchise onto its new grass field. Figuring out the details of the next eight months is a thrilling prospect for the veteran coach tasked with building a team worthy of this club's sky-high ambitions.

"I've got an idea that there's a chance here to do something good, something special," Bradley said Friday. "I have a vision of what I want football to look like, and I'm driven to take all of my experiences and ideas and put them into action." LAFC formally introduced Bradley in the rotunda of the Natural History Museum, which sits in the same park as the soccer stadium currently well into construction on the former site of the Los Angeles Sports Arena. Dozens of hard-core fans of this player-less team chanted from the rotunda's second-story balcony, serenading the coach with chants of "Bob the Builder, yes he can!"

Bradley has been in contact with LAFC general manager John Thorington — his former player with the US national team — for the past year, during which Bradley was hired and fired by Swansea City. The coach had never set foot on the Banc of California Stadium site until team President Tom Penn led him on a tour after his news conference.

Real captain would welcome Mbappe

Training spat has Barca pals asking Neymar to stay

MIAMI, July 29, (AFP): Barcelona star teammates said Friday they have begged Neymar to resist the temptation of moving to Paris St Germain after a training ground altercation with new signing Nelson Semedo.

The French giants are supposedly ready to launch a record-breaking \$256 million (218 million euros) move for Neymar, sparking exit fears.

The unsettled 25-year-old Brazilian stormed off the practice pitch in disgust and has yet to commit his future to Barcelona ahead of the transfer deadline, still more than a month away.

"It's true, something did happen, but that's sometimes what happens in training," Barca midfielder Andres Iniesta said.

"All the talk about Neymar right now, everything is magnified. Things like this can happen. It's a personal decision for him, but of course we want him to stay."

Strike partner Luis Suarez has formed a deadly partnership with Neymar and echoed Iniesta's calls for the interest from PSG to be dis-

missed once and for all.

"As soon as he clarifies the situation it's better for us and him. He will have his say when he is ready and as a teammate I will support him," Suarez said.

"Our relationship won't change. We want him to stay."

Boss Ernesto Valverde swerved the media on the eve of the match

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with arch-rival Real, but Iniesta sang Neymar's praises.

"For me, he's one of the best players in the world. He brings so much to the team and hopefully he will stay for many years," Iniesta said.

"He is worth more than \$200 million or \$300 million. His playing style suits us and he can only improve with us."

Neymar made an appearance at a Nike shop in Miami on Friday afternoon to celebrate the release of his new boots.

But the superstar striker refused to talk about the speculation and just

posed for photographs with fans a day after the training spat at Miami's Barry University training complex.

Barca are set to return to Spain after the clash at the home stadium of the NFL's Miami Dolphins, but

Neymar is still lined up to travel to China on business for the La Liga giants.

Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos says French teen striker Kylian Mbappe will become a welcome



Neymar #11 of Barcelona dribbles past Chris Smalling #12 of Manchester United in the first half during the International Champions Cup match at FedExField on July 26, in Landover, Maryland. (AFP)

addition to the reigning Champions League and La Liga champions should he decide to leave Monaco.

The 18-year-old forward is wanted by Real Madrid manager Zinedine Zidane, with the Spanish giants poised to make him one of the most expensive players of all time in a move that could cost around \$211 million (180 million euros).

Ramos was adamant Mbappe has the qualities to become of the best in the world.

"It's not a decision for me but Mbappe is a great prospect. There are not young players around like him. We have an important year ahead of us and already have excellent players," Ramos said ahead of Saturday's meeting with arch-rivals Barcelona in Miami.

"But it's money which moves football and people can pay what they want. If he wants to come to Real Madrid, the doors will be open."

"We will see what happens," Zidane said. "He's a good player. They are our most important rivals but we lost our last match against

Manchester City and we want to put in a strong performance."

"We are happy, want to perform, we want to be physically better. That's our goal, but we are so happy to be here."

Cristiano Ronaldo kept the International Champions Cup organizers waiting until the very last minute before deciding he would not be playing.

The Portuguese star has been in Asia completing commercial obligations and is expected in court on Monday in Madrid to testify in a tax-evasion case, meaning his presence in South Florida was always highly doubtful.

"Unfortunately, Ronaldo's personal commitments precluded him from being here," Charlie Stillitano, chairman of organisers Relevant Sports, told the Miami Herald.

"He really wanted to be here. He wanted until today to let us know, but it just didn't work out. We still have the two best teams and the top stars minus one."