

F1 – Seventh Heaven for Vettel in Abu Dhabi



Newly-crowned world champion Sebastian Vettel showed that he wasn't slowing down for anything or anyone as he took his seventh consecutive win with a dominant display in Abu Dhabi yesterday. He now matches Michael Schumacher's 2004 record of consecutive wins in a season and could yet match his fellow German's record of 13 wins in a season if he is victorious in the two remaining races. In Abu Dhabi, Vettel finished 30 seconds ahead of his closest challenger, Red Bull team mate Mark Webber, and cruised to victory without any challenge from the other drivers.

Webber, who started from pole position, ended up behind his team mate by the first corner and was then overtaken by the Mercedes of Nico Rosberg. After the first round of pitstops, Webber managed to fight his way through traffic and overtake Rosberg for second place, but by that time Vettel was long gone and there was no way for anybody else to catch the four-time world champion. Webber and Rosberg both held on to their positions until the end of the race, with the Lotus of Romain Grosjean following closely behind in 4th place.

It was a disastrous start for Grosjean's team mate Kimi Raikkonen, who was out of the race in the first corner after a collision with Giedo van der Garde. Raikkonen, who qualified 5th but started at the back of the grid as a result of his car floor failing a flexibility test, got caught out in the close battles at the back of the pack and paid the price for an early attempt at moving up the grid. The Finn, who is still at odds with his team over a pay dispute, left the circuit almost immediately, not hanging around to see the end of the race.

While most of the teams appeared to opt for a two-stop strategy early in the race, Ferrari tried for as long as possible to make a one-stop work, and for a while, it looked promising. But when the tyres began to lose performance they switched to a two-stop, with Felipe Massa fitting a set of medium tyres while his team mate Fernando Alonso opted for the faster – but less durable – softs. Alonso's superior speed allowed him to catch Lewis Hamilton and Paul di Resta to take 5th place despite being under threat of a penalty for leaving the track after his pit-lane exit took him perilously close to Jean-Eric Vergne in the Toro Rosso.

Paul di Resta was the driver who managed to pull off the one-stop strategy with success, and he drove a solid race with a particularly good performance over the last few laps, where he managed to keep the Mercedes of Hamilton behind to hold on to 6th place. Speaking after the race, di Resta said: "It's a great feeling to finish 6th and make the one-stop strategy work. I said yesterday that we had opted to set the car up more for the race and it really paid off today. There were times when we had to be very quick and times when we had to manage the pace and look after the tyres.

"Towards the end of the race I was battling with Fernando and Lewis, but it was impossible to hold Fernando back because he was on much fresher soft tyres. Lewis was on the mediums so I just focused on getting clean exits from the hairpin and the chicane leading onto the long straights, and was able to stay ahead. The eight points are just what we needed and everybody in the team deserves credit for the big effort that has gone in this week. That's two strong weekends in a row and we will move to Austin determined to keep up the momentum."

Full Race Results

- 1 VETTEL
- 2 WEBBER
- 3 ROSBERG

4 GROSJEAN
5 ALONSO
6 DI RESTA
7 HAMILTON
8 MASSA
9 PEREZ
10 SUTIL
11 MALDONADO
12 BUTTON
13 GUTIERREZ
14 HULKENBERG
15 BOTTAS
16 RICCIARDO
17 VERGNE
18 VAN DER GARDE
19 PIC
20 BIANCHI
21 CHILTON
22 RAIKKONEN (DNF)