

# Hamilton, Vettel united over halo effect



Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton

## Abu Dhabi

**L**ewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel agreed on Thursday that next season's Formula One halo-carrying racing cars will be uglier, but safer – and joked about their on-track clashes during this year's world title tussle.

The two four-time champions spoke at a news conference ahead of this weekend's season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix where the 32-year-old Briton is hoping to claim his 10th win of the season for Mercedes.

Vettel, who won the Brazilian Grand Prix two weekends ago, aims to beat him and secure runners-up spot in his Ferrari.

Both were in a lighthearted mood with Hamilton suggesting he is aiming for a fifth title next year when, according to a grinning Vettel, he and Ferrari will enjoy a "walk in the park" if they can match or improve on their progress in 2017.

But they were serious about the future looks and safety of the cars they will race.

"It's the last time where the cars will look good," said Hamilton, looking ahead to this weekend's race.

"I think, from next year, it's all downhill in terms of how it looks, but safety will go up at least."

Vettel agreed: "I think the

cars will look different next year. Everything I've seen so far looks different, but on the other hand I think it's something we will all get used to."

"It's no doubt the cars look better the way they are now, but I'm sure that we'll get used to it. We'll work on the aesthetics so that it will look fine. In the end it's probably less of a big deal."

F1 is introducing the 'halo', a cockpit protection device, to prevent flying debris hitting the drivers.

The two rivals also reflected on the season past.

Asked to choose their highlights, Vettel smiled and suggested they "start with Baku – break the ice?" Hamilton

responded with an audible "Hmmm... Baku is a good one."

## 'Fired up'

It was in Baku that a volatile Vettel drove his Ferrari into Hamilton's Mercedes while they were under Safety Car conditions.

Hamilton added: "We need more races like Barcelona, wheel to wheel."

Earlier this week, Hamilton had told *motorsport.tv* that he warned Vettel about the future following their Baku clash.

"When I spoke to him later, I was like 'that's a sign of disrespect so don't ever disrespect me like that

again otherwise then we will have problems'," said Hamilton.

"I've never done that to someone. I don't even know what he was thinking to have done...I've never been in a position like that. I guess people react differently under certain pressures."

On Thursday, he added: "It was great to have those close battles this year with Sebastian, a four-time world champion you respect."

Asked about next year, he said: "I feel very honoured to be close to a great sporting icon in Juan Manuel Fangio. He's kind of the godfather of the sport."

Looking back, Vettel said: "It has been close for most of the year, but not close enough when it mattered. From that, we have made our conclusions, learned our lessons, so that will help us next year."

"We are completely fired up. It has been bitter, but I think it has been positive that we have had a couple of races since Mexico to approach and look forward to next season."

Hamilton did not talk about his contract with Mercedes following overnight reports claiming that he is poised to finalise a new three-year deal valued at £120 million (\$160mn). (AFP)

# Barca leave Messi on bench and qualify with 0-0 draw

## Turin

**B**arcelona allowed themselves the luxury of starting with Lionel Messi on the bench and still held out for a 0-0 draw at Juventus to reach the last 16 of the Champions League on Wednesday.

Barcelona, who brought on Messi early in the second half, enjoyed long spells of possession but used it as a defensive tactic to stop Juventus attacking rather than creating chances

themselves.

Juve were lacklustre, with forward Gonzalo Higuain barely getting a look-in as they failed to score in a home match for the first time since September last year.

The Turin side nearly snatched a win in stoppage time but Paulo Dybala's low shot from the edge of the area was turned around the post by goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

Even so, coach Massimiliano Allegri

enjoyed the match. "It was a nice game from a tactical point of view, the lads worked hard to defend well," he said. "We were more interested in the performance than the result."

The Serie A side, who are second in Group D, will qualify for the last 16 unless they fail to beat Olympiakos away in their final game next month and Sporting win at Barcelona.

Sporting kept alive their own hopes by beating Olympiakos 3-1 in Lisbon in the other game with Bas Dost scoring twice. Bruno Cesar was also on target for Sporting and Vadis Odjidja-Ofoe scored a late consolation for the Greeks who were eliminated.

Barcelona, who played their second successive goalless draw in the group, have 11 points and are guaranteed to finish top. Juve are on eight, Sporting on seven and Olympiakos on one.

Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde said that Messi had needed a rest. "He had to take a break at some point... he's been playing a lot of games," he said.

Barcelona were closest to a first-half goal when a long-range Ivan Rakitic free kick found its way through the penalty area, bounced off the post and fell to Paulinho, who was unable to take advantage. (Reuters)

# PSG crush Celtic 7-1

## Paris

**N**eymar scored a double as Paris St Germain extended their perfect Champions League record with a 7-1 home demolition of Celtic on Wednesday.

The Brazilian forward, Edinson Cavani, who also scored twice, Kylian Mbappe, Marco Verratti and Dani Alves all found the back of the net after Moussa Dembele's early opener for the visitors as PSG powered on to 15 points from five games.

They lead second-placed Bayern Munich, who won 2-1 at Anderlecht, by three points before they play in

Germany with Group B's first place at stake.

Celtic got off to a dream start when Dembele opened the scoring in the first minute from a corner, but PSG reacted swiftly.

Cavani made it 3-1 six minutes later from close range with Mbappe adding another in the 35th from Marquinhos's cross.

The Uruguayan striker, Verratti and Alves scored again after the break as PSG became the most prolific team in the Champions League group phase with 24 goals. (Reuters)



Juventus' Gonzalo Higuain in action with Barcelona's Gerard Pique



PSG's Neymar kicks the ball during a Champions League Group B soccer match