

Vettel puts Ferrari on pole

Sochi

Championship leader Sebastian Vettel admitted it felt "fantastic" to lead Ferrari to their first front row lock out in nine years after he took pole position in Saturday's thrilling qualifying session for the Russian Grand Prix.

The four-time world champion's blistering fastest lap and Ferrari team-mate Kimi Raikkonen's second place on the grid brought to an end rivals champions Mercedes long and dominant supremacy in qualifying.

The 29-year-old German outpaced Raikkonen by 0.059 seconds with another Finn, Valtteri Bottas of Mercedes, third fastest with less than a tenth of a second separating the top three.

Britain's Lewis Hamilton was fourth fastest, the first time Mercedes failed to have a car on the front row for 31 races.

"If you have a rhythm here it feels fantastic," said Vettel, who has won the last nine races at which he started from pole position.

"And I am glad I got it back. It is great to have both cars on the front row, but it is only part of the job done.

"I knew it would be tight, I knew I would be the first one crossing the line. I got Valtteri's time -- and he did not manage to improve -- and when I got the message I had got it... I was over the moon.

"In qualifying, Mercedes have been very, very strong. I am sure it will be very close tomorrow, especially over the long run

"We will see, but for now we are full of joy. We are back -- at least if you talk about the front row!"

It was Vettel's first pole this year, his second for Ferrari and the 47th of his career.

Ferrari also achieved a front row lockout for the first time in 127 races going back to the 2008 French Grand Prix, where Raikkonen took pole.

"It's hard to understand how we're going to make it better, said Raikkonen.

Vettel's success also brought to an end Mercedes'

run of 18 straight pole positions dating back to last year's Monaco Grand Prix.

"To be honest, Ferrari have had the upper hand all weekend, but as always Sunday is the day that counts," said Bottas.

Hamilton, rarely away from the front row, said he had plenty of homework overnight.

"I need to find out what we are missing," said the former three-time world champion.

Australian Daniel Ricciardo was fifth for Red Bull ahead of Brazilian Felipe Massa of Williams, Dutch teenager Max Verstappen in the second Red Bull and German Nico Hulkenberg of Renault.

Mexican Sergio Perez was ninth for Force India ahead of his team-mate Frenchman Esteban Ocon. (AFP)



Sebastian Vettel celebrates



- Grid in Sochi:**
- 1st row:**
Sebastian Vettel (GER/Ferrari)
Kimi Raikkonen (FIN/Ferrari)
 - 2nd row:**
Valtteri Bottas (FIN/Mercedes)
Lewis Hamilton (GBR/Mercedes)
 - 3rd row:**
Daniel Ricciardo (AUS/Red Bull-TAG Heuer)
Felipe Massa (BRA/Williams-Mercedes)
 - 4th row:**
Max Verstappen (NED/Red Bull-TAG Heuer)
Nico Hulkenberg (GER/Renault)
 - 5th row:**
Sergio Pérez (MEX/Force India-Mercedes)
Esteban Ocon (FRA/Force India-Mercedes)
 - 6th row:**
Lance Stroll (CAN/Williams-Mercedes)
Daniil Kvyat (RUS/Toro Rosso-Renault)
 - 7th row:**
Kevin Magnussen (DEN/Haas-Ferrari)
Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP/Toro Rosso-Renault)
 - 8th row:**
Fernando Alonso (ESP/McLaren-Honda)
Jolyon Palmer (GBR/Renault)
 - 9th row:**
Pascal Wehrlein (GER/Sauber-Ferrari)
Marcus Ericsson (SWE/Sauber-Ferrari)
 - 10th row:**
Romain Grosjean (FRA/Haas-Ferrari)
Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL/McLaren-Honda)