

Bottas claim pole for season opener

Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas upstages teammate Lewis Hamilton to take pole in Austria

AFP | Spielberg

Valtteri Bottas survived a high-speed spin as he upstaged Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton with a sizzling display yesterday to claim pole position for Sunday's delayed season-opening Austrian Grand Prix.

The Finnish driver outpaced the six-time champion with a best lap in qualifying in one minute and 2.939 seconds and then survived an 'off' into the gravel and a spin on his final lap to remain 0.012 seconds clear of the Briton.

It was Bottas' third pole at the Austrian Grand Prix and the 12th of his career, a feat that followed Hamilton's clean sweep of the three practice sessions on Friday and Saturday morning.

"It feels really good - I've missed this feeling," said Bottas. "The qualifying shakes! It's something special when you push the car to the limit and I've been waiting for a long time - we seem to be in our own league."

Hamilton said: "A great job by Valtteri and it's a great start to the season. I think we show year on year that we are the best team - because we are open-minded, keep with the times and nobody is too stubborn to admit they are wrong."

Max Verstappen was third for Red Bull, half a second adrift of the two newly-painted 'black arrows' cars whose dominating



Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas reacts after the qualifying round

performance delivered a 65th front row lock out for the team, equalling Ferrari's record.

"I'm happy to be P3," said Verstappen. "But we have a different tyre -- so it's going to be interesting."

Lando Norris was an impressive fourth for McLaren ahead of Alex Albon in the second Red Bull and Sergio Perez who was sixth in Racing Point's 'pink Mercedes'.

Charles Leclerc was a disappointed seventh for Ferrari ahead of his future team-mate Carlos Sainz in the second McLaren, Lance Stroll in the second Racing Point and Daniel

Ricciardo of Renault.

On a warm, sunlit afternoon in the Styrian Alps, Verstappen shone in Q1 before Mercedes found their rhythm. Five drivers were eliminated led by Kevin Magnussen of Haas, in 16th along with George Russell for the improved Williams team, and Antonio Giovinazzi and his Alfa Romeo team-mate Kimi Raikkonen.

Canadian Nicholas Latifi, who crashed heavily in the second Williams in yesterday morning's third and final practice session, was 20th - a tough baptism for the rookie on a day of encouragement for the 'up for sale' Wil-

liams team.

Bottas and Hamilton were first out on track for Q2 ahead of Stroll, the 'black arrows' running on softs while behind them, when he emerged, Verstappen took to medium compound tyres.

The champion quickly set the pace in 1:03.325, two-tenths clear of Bottas while Verstappen, seeking a hat-trick of Austrian triumphs was adrift by seven-tenths.

Albon, in the second Red Bull pushed four-time champion Sebastian Vettel out of the top ten in his Ferrari.

The German's team-mate

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LEWIS HAMILTON

Charles Leclerc scrambled through in 10th. "That's crazy," he reacted. "It's a surprise. I thought we had more in hand than that," said Vettel. "But we should make up some ground tomorrow in the race..."

Out with Vettel, in his final Ferrari season, went the Alpha Tauri paid Pierre Gasly and Daniil Kvyat ahead of two Frenchmen Renault's Esteban Ocon and Romain Grosjean of Haas.

Verstappen was eighth, but slowed on his final lap on softs to ensure he starts Sunday's race on medium tyres, a tactical decision to enhance the team's race strategy.

When the top-ten shootout began, Bottas topped Hamilton on the first runs by one-tenth in 1:02.939 with Verstappen third by six-tenths - suggesting it was an in-team scrap for pole for the two Mercedes men.

Buffon breaks record in Juve win
AFP | Milan



Gianluigi Buffon

Gianluigi Buffon set a new Serie A appearances record on Saturday as Juventus beat Torino 4-1 in the Turin derby to move seven points clear at the top of the table.

The 42-year-old goalkeeper Buffon passed the previous record of 647 appearances he jointly held with AC Milan great Paolo Maldini as he started the game at the Allianz Stadium.

Cristiano Ronaldo was among the scorers, becoming the first Juve player to score 25 Serie A goals in a season in 59 years, as Maurizio Sarri's men moved further clear of second-placed Lazio, who host in-form AC Milan later on Saturday.

Buffon, who spent last season at French club Paris Saint-Germain before rejoining Juve this term, signed a one-year contract extension earlier this week.

It was the eighth Serie A appearance this campaign for Buffon, with Polish international Wojciech Szczesny usually the defending champions' number one.

Rampant Man Utd rout Bournemouth

AFP | Manchester

Manchester United continued their charge into the Premier League top four with another devastating attacking display as they thrashed Bournemouth 5-2 yesterday with Mason Greenwood, Anthony Martial, Marcus Rashford and Bruno Fernandes doing the damage.

Another bad day for Bournemouth pushed the Cherries closer to a return to the Championship as they remain rooted in the bottom three despite taking a shock lead at Old Trafford through Junior Stanislas.

Teenage sensation Greenwood, Rashford from the penalty spot and Martial hit back before half-time.

Former United forward Josh King's penalty briefly gave the visitors hope early in the second half, but another thumping finish from Greenwood and a trademark Fernandes free-kick gave United five goals at Old Trafford in a Premier League



Mason Greenwood of Manchester United scores his team's fourth goal

game for the first time since 2011.

Victory takes Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men a point above Chelsea into fourth as they extended an unbeaten run stretching back to January to 16 games.

United had kept 11 clean sheets in their previous 15 matches without defeat, but defensive lapses were the only blight on another satisfying af-

ternoon for Solskjaer.

Harry Maguire and David de Gea were at fault for the only points the Red Devils have dropped since the Premier League's restart in a 1-1 draw at Tottenham.

Both were culpable as Stanislas nutmegged the world's most expensive defender and then fired in at De Gea's near post completely against the run of

play on 16 minutes.

Those errors were not as costly this time as the blossoming front three of Greenwood, Martial and Rashford quickly turned the game around.

Greenwood's star is rising fast and the 18-year-old blasted home from Fernandes's pass to get United back on track.

The hosts were then gifted a second by Adam Smith's handball inside the area and Fernandes stepped aside to let Rashford net for the first time since January.



Manchester United extended an unbeaten run stretching to 16 games

Setien plays down Messi and Griezmann uncertainty



Barcelona's French forward Antoine Griezmann (R) and Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi arrive to warm up before a match

AFP | Madrid

Barcelona coach Quique Setien moved to ease concerns yesterday about the futures of Lionel Messi and Antoine Griezmann.

Messi's contract is due to expire next year and, according to Spanish radio station Cadena Ser, the Argentinian has stopped talks due to frustrations with the direction the club is going in.

Asked about suggestions Messi plans to leave Barcelona, Setien said: "I won't speculate about this because I haven't heard from him so I'm not aware of him saying anything."

"I see him well, everything else is speculation that I won't get involved in. We speak about what we have to speak about and nothing else."

Griezmann's position is also

in doubt after a disappointing first season since joining from Atletico Madrid.

Barcelona play away at in-form Villarreal on Sunday, with Real Madrid sitting four points clear at the top of the table.

"He's fine, I exchanged a few words with him. He's a great professional. He understands the situation because he's seen it before," Setien said about Griezmann.

"It will not affect him because he is a very positive person. We can count on him 100 per cent."

Griezmann has started three of Barca's last four matches on the bench, including the crunch games against Sevilla and Atletico, both of which Barcelona drew.

Setien described Griezmann as "unquestionable" last month.

Khabib Nurmagomedov's father dies aged 57 after coronavirus fight

TDT | Manama

Khabib Nurmagomedov's father Abdulmanap, who was battling Covid-19 for several months, passed away after his condition worsened over the last few days.

BRAVE CF has extended its



Abdulmanap

condolence on the demise in a statement on social media.

Khabib's father, 57, doubled as his coach and was also a world-renowned mixed martial arts coach.

However, in the last week of May 2020, he was in a condition of medically induced coma due

to complications from pneumonia which led to heart surgery in his homeland of Russia's Republic of Dagestan,

Khabib cleared the air and said that heart surgery was the result of complications due to COVID-19, as Abdulmanap remained serious thereafter.