

China sprint race presents 'huge challenge' in F1's new era

Shanghai's layout demands different battery strategy for new 50/50 hybrid cars

● Shanghai hosts season's first sprint

● Only one practice before sprint qualifying Friday

● Shanghai's long straight, multiple complex turns tests batteries

● George Russell requests active wing adjustments

● Verstappen investigates early-season battery power loss

● McLaren works to close massive performance gap

AFP | Shanghai



Drivers compete in the Formula One Chinese Grand Prix 2025 at the Shanghai International Circuit (file photo)

Formula One's new era heads into its first sprint in Shanghai this weekend, with the Chinese Grand Prix promising a very different test to Melbourne, where George Russell led home a Mercedes one-two.

The Silver Arrows dominated the season-opener, Russell winning from Kimi Antonelli and followed home by the Ferrari pair of Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton in the first race under sweeping new regulations.

Lando Norris and McLaren struggled, the British world champion trailing home fifth and teammate Oscar Piastri failing to even start after crashing on his way to the grid.

Red Bull's four-time champion Max Verstappen carved his way through the field to sixth after starting 20th on the grid following a qualifying crash.

CHINA
Shanghai
March 15

56

x 5.451

= 305.066



The Shanghai International Circuit, unlike the Albert Park track in Melbourne, has one long straight and several complexes

of turns. It will require a different approach to battery deployment and energy harvesting in the

new cars, which have a 50-50 split between conventional and electrical power.

But with only one practice session before sprint qualifying on Friday, the teams will have little time to hone their set-ups and strategies.

Saturday morning will see the sprint race over 19 laps of the 5.451km circuit and grand prix qualifying in the afternoon.

Sunday's grand prix will be over 56 laps, and if the race in Melbourne is anything to go by, it could be very eventful.

"Shanghai is going to be important to be straight on point with deployment, with everything, because obviously we get only one practice and then we go into qualifying," said Antonelli.

"The rate of development is going to be massive and it's going to be important to not put any

wrong step because the situation can flip very quickly."

Leclerc agreed: "To have a sprint race so early on in a season like this will be a huge challenge for everybody. It's going to be very tricky."

Race-winner Russell said his only reservation about the 2026 cars was a lack of control when the active front wing was opened up under the new "straight mode".

Introduced this season to reduce drag and give a boost of speed akin to the now-defunct DRS system, Russell said it made the cars skittish.

'Pretty big gap'

"The only thing I would request from the FIA is that the front wing doesn't drop as aggressively," said Russell.

"When we open 'straight mode' we will have lots of un-



George Russell has formally requested the FIA modify the "straight mode" active aero, reporting dangerous levels of understeer and a total loss of front-end grip when pulling out of a rival's slipstream

dersteer, and when I was behind Charles and I was trying to duck out of his slipstream it was like my front wing wasn't working.

"So, I think from a safety aspect that would make the racing safer, better. I don't see a downside of doing it."

Norris was highly critical of the new cars.

McLaren, so dominant last season, were off the pace all weekend in Australia.

"The gap to the guys ahead is pretty big and we clearly have a lot of work to do," said the world champion.

Verstappen admitted Red Bull also has problems to address.

"I had some issues at the start with the battery so as soon as the clutch was dropped, I had no power, so that is something we need to understand," said the Dutchman.

"It was a decent comeback from P20 and we will work as a team to close the gap further."

New to the grid, Cadillac were encouraged by Sergio Perez finishing 16th on the team's much-anticipated debut.

"It was great to see the Cadillac Formula 1 Team bring its first car home," said team principal Graeme Lowdon.

Brilliant Adebayo scores 83 points, second highest in NBA history

AFP | Miami

Bam Adebayo erupted for a jaw-dropping 83 points -- the second highest total in NBA history -- as the Miami Heat thrashed the Washington Wizards 150-129 on Tuesday.

Adebayo's astonishing performance surpassed the 81 points scored by the late Kobe Bryant for the Los Angeles Lakers against Toronto in 2006, and is second only to Wilt Chamberlain's iconic 100-point haul against the New York Knicks in 1962.

Adebayo served notice that a special performance could be on the cards with an electric first quarter, where he poured in 31 points from 10-of-16 shooting.

By half-time he had reached 43 points and he kept the pedal down after the interval with 19



Bam Adebayo celebrates on his way to an astonishing 83-point performance in Miami's win over Washington

points in the third quarter to take his tally to 62.

At that juncture it became a question of whether Adebayo

could threaten Bryant's 20-year-old tally of 81 points.

Adebayo duly eclipsed that record late in the fourth quarter. Two free throws saw him draw level with Bryant's total, and two more took him to 83 with just over a minute remaining.

That was the cue for Adebayo to be subbed out, leaving the court to a standing ovation from a disbelieving home crowd at Miami's Kaseya Center.

"Man, I wish I could relive it twice," Adebayo said, adding his individual masterpiece would not have been possible without the support of family, fans and his teammates.

"Somebody had to pass me the ball. I appreciate coach for drawing up plays for me and I got it going tonight."

Adebayo admitted he had

sensed a historic performance was beckoning after his first-half display, ranking it as the highpoint of his career.

"This is number one, for sure," Adebayo said.

Adebayo also took special satisfaction at surpassing his boyhood idol Bryant's mark of 81.

'Surreal moment'

"It's Wilt, me and then Kobe -- that sounds crazy," Adebayo said, adding that he had reflected on how Bryant, who died in a helicopter crash in Los Angeles in 2020, would have responded to his performance.

"To me it's wondering what he would say," Adebayo said. "My mind is like 'What would he say to me?' Because I've always wanted to have a conversation with him."

"He'd probably say 'Do it

again'. Just a surreal moment being in the company of somebody you idolized growing up."

Miami coach Erik Spoelstra described Adebayo's virtuoso display as "just an absolutely surreal night."

"We've been blessed to have been a part of a lot of big moments in this arena, and this one, it just happened," Spoelstra said. "I'm grateful that we were all able to witness it."

Spoelstra said Miami had sought to stick to their game plan during Adebayo's 43-point first half, but gradually pivoted towards helping him chase a historic total.

"At half-time we talked about continuing to play our game," Spoelstra said. "In the second half I was a little bit more intentional trying to get him some touches."