

# Russell blasts Verstappen’s aggression

George Russell states a Max Verstappen race ban would be justified for reckless driving

● Russell criticizes Verstappen’s driving

● Verstappen one penalty point from race ban

AFP | Montreal

George Russell made clear on Thursday that if Max Verstappen is banned from racing it would be his own fault and an entirely justified outcome due to his reckless driving.

The Briton, who clashed with the four-time world champion last season and again at the Spanish Grand Prix earlier this month, said he believed the Dutchman had attempted to scare him when he rammed his Red Bull into Russell’s Mercedes.

“He was trying to run me off the road,” said Russell, speaking to reporters ahead of this weekend’s Canadian Grand Prix.

“I don’t think he was trying to intentionally crash into me. He wanted to just sort of scare me a bit, but he just misjudged it.

“Again, it wasn’t going to scare me, it was all just a bit surprising.



Red Bull’s Max Verstappen, McLaren’s Oscar Piastri and Mercedes’ George Russell celebrate after the qualifying session in Imola (file photo)

I’m not looking for an apology. His actions cost him -- and they benefitted me. So I should be almost thanking him!

“Obviously, I’d be feeling very differently if it took me out of the race, but it is good to see that he took accountability. I was a bit

surprised about that.”

Verstappen avoided talking about the incident after the race, but admitted on social media 24 hours later that he had done something that should not have happened.

He was penalised and dropped

from fifth to 10th and was also given a three-point penalty on his driving super-licence, taking him to 11 points.

If he reaches 12 in the next two races he will be given a one-race ban.

“It wouldn’t be unjust,” said

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GEORGE RUSSELL

Russell. “At the end of the day, that’s why the penalty points are there. If you keep driving recklessly you will accumulate points and get punished with a race ban.

“You’ve got it in your own hands and it doesn’t go without risk.”

Russell added that he did not expect Verstappen to change his aggressive style.

“I don’t think so, but it depends on the circumstances, doesn’t it? When you are going for a championship, it’s slightly different.

“That’s why I believe he wasn’t intentionally trying to crash into me. He was just trying to get his elbows out and show who’s boss, but he got that wrong -- Jos (Verstappen’s father) is the boss!”

BETTER YOU KNOW

Verstappen and Russell had an awkward airport encounter days after their clash - discussing baby gear at security while avoiding any mention of their on-track incident

Russell said he had briefly spoken to Verstappen since their clash, but they did not talk about the incident.

“We bumped into each other at the airport on Sunday morning when I was going to Roland Garros. To be honest, I totally forgot about Barcelona because he was there with his new-born and we were at the security machine.

“We just had a quick chat and then he was busy folding the pram down to put it through the machine.”

## Hamilton slams Italian media speculation on Ferrari and Vasseur

AFP | Montreal

Lewis Hamilton on Thursday slammed Italian media speculation that Ferrari are poised to dismiss team boss Fred Vasseur and that he is considering his future with the team as total “nonsense”.

The seven-time world champion asked reporters to “stop making stuff up” as he delivered an impassioned response to the reports on the eve of this weekend’s Canadian Grand Prix, an event he has won a record-equalling seven times.

“To everyone that’s writing stories of me considering not racing, I’ve literally only just started with Ferrari,” he said during a news conference at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

“I’m here for several years. I’m here for the long haul so there’s no question about where my head’s at and what I’m working towards achieving with this team.

“There are zero doubts so, please, stop making up stuff.”

Italian media stories had suggested Vasseur was responsible for the team’s disappointing start to the season when they



Ferrari’s British driver Lewis Hamilton (L) and Ferrari’s French team principal Frederic Vasseur speak in Imola (file photo)

had been expected to challenge McLaren for the championship.

After nine races, with Hamilton, 40, brought in as a marquee signing to lead a title bid, the team languish 197 points behind McLaren in the teams’ title race while Hamilton and Charles Leclerc are winless in a drivers’ championship led by the two McLaren drivers.

Hamilton said: “I was made

aware of this just before I got here so I’ve not read the stories and it’s definitely not nice to hear that there are stories like that out there.

“Firstly, I love working with Fred. Fred’s the main reason I’m in this team and I got the opportunity to be here, for which I’m forever grateful, and we’re in this together.

“We’re working hard in the background. Things aren’t per-

fect, but for me, as I’ve said, I’m here to work with the team, but also with Fred.

“I want Fred here. I do believe Fred is the person to take us to the top. So this, ultimately, is nonsense what people have written.”

When asked about the possible exit of Vasseur, he added: “I don’t think that’s on the cards as far as I’m aware and it’s certainly not something I would be supportive of.

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LEWIS HAMILTON

## Hadjar says prospect of promotion to Red Bull is ‘scary’



Red Bull’s Max Verstappen, McLaren’s Oscar Piastri and Mercedes’ George Russell celebrate after the qualifying session in Imola (file photo)

AFP | Montreal

Racing Bulls rookie Isack Hadjar said on Thursday that the prospect of promotion to race alongside Max Verstappen at Red Bull was “scary”.

The 20-year-old veteran of only nine Grands Prix this year has been talked of as a possible replacement for Yuki Tsunoda, who himself was promoted to replace Liam Lawson, after only two races.

But the Frenchman, who has established himself with a string of impressive top-10 finishes, said he preferred to stay with Racing Bulls.

“That’s a bit scary!,” he said. “Look, I’m just nine races in and I am not ready for that. Just look at Yuki and Liam and they are top drivers.”

Hadjar has scored 21 points to sit ninth in the drivers’ championship.

## Pogacar back in Dauphine yellow after sixth stage victory

AFP | Combloux

Tadej Pogacar soloed to victory in the sixth stage of the Criterium du Dauphine yesterday to reclaim the yellow jersey and put himself firmly in contention for overall victory.

With this 97th victory of his career, the Slovenian, who cruised in 1min 1sec ahead of Denmark’s Jonas Vingegaard, becomes the active rider with the joint-most victories -- on a par with French sprinter Ar-



Tadej Pogacar (R) in action

naud Demare.

Belgian Remco Evenepoel, who was leading the overall classification, finished fifth at 1min 50sec.

Pogacar now has a 43sec lead over Vingegaard, 54sec over German Florian Lipowitz and 1min 22sec over Evenepoel.

The Slovenian had already worn the yellow jersey before in this 77th edition of the Dauphine after claiming victory in the first stage last weekend.

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