

# Hamilton wins 1,000th race

Lewis Hamilton beats Valtteri Bottas in Chinese Grand Prix as Mercedes dominate 1,000th Formula One race

● Hamilton overtook team-mate Bottas before the first corner

● Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was ordered to allow Sebastian Vettel past as he completed the podium places

AFP | Shanghai, China

Lewis Hamilton won the 1,000th Formula One grand prix yesterday after grabbing the lead from Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas at the first corner and powering to victory in blustery Shanghai.

Hamilton, who started from second on the grid, took the world championship lead after romping home to win the Chinese Grand Prix by more than 6.5 seconds from Bottas, with Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel third. Max Verstappen of Red Bull was fourth and Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari was fifth.

This was world champion Hamilton's sixth victory at the Chinese Grand Prix and second in a row this season.

"To have a one-two (for Mercedes) is really special in the 1,000th grand prix but the start was where it made the difference and the rest is history," said the Briton.

Hamilton was pipped for pole



Lewis Hamilton celebrates winning the race

position by Bottas by just 0.023 seconds in qualifying and had said that he was "struggling with the car".

But the Finn laboured out of the blocks, allowing Hamilton to nip in and grab the lead at the first corner.

"I lost it on the start, honestly, shame about the start, I got some wheel spin on the start line," said

Bottas, who also relinquished his hold on the standings after three races.

Talented 21-year-old Leclerc meanwhile pulled off the same trick at the start at the expense of his team-mate Vettel, darting into third.

There was more early drama when Toro Rosso's Daniil Kvyat tangled with both McLarens of

Lando Norris and Carlos Sainz, earning the Russian a drive-through penalty.

On lap 11, four-time world champion Vettel leapfrogged back in front of Monaco's Leclerc into third following radio orders from Ferrari telling the youngster to let him pass.

"We do our job, stay focused," Leclerc -- agonisingly denied

victory last time out in Bahrain after his Ferrari lost power late on -- was informed on team radio after he briefly protested.

Back at the front, the 34-year-old Hamilton began pulling away, establishing a more than five-second gap on Bottas with a third of the race gone.

With five-time world champion Hamilton -- winner in Bah-

Lewis Hamilton cruised to his 75th career win at the Chinese Grand Prix

rain two weeks ago -- serene up top, the real battles unfolded behind him.

Vettel, under pressure after a number of unforced errors going back to last season, went wheel-to-wheel with Verstappen after both pitted for fresh tyres.

Vettel, Bottas and then Toro Rosso's Alexander Albon, who missed qualifying after a nasty crash in final practice, all exchanged fastest laps.

On lap 38 of the 56 it was Leclerc and Bottas who had a skirmish in the compelling battle for second. Leclerc then pitted and was momentarily held up by a comparatively sluggish change of tyres.

Nico Hulkenberg, who qualified eighth for Renault, saw his race come to an early conclusion after the team retired his faltering car. Norris and Kvyat were also forced out before the end.

The fourth race of the season takes place on the streets of Baku, in Azerbaijan, in a fortnight.

## Coman brace returns Bayern to the top of the Bundesliga



Bayern Munich's French defender Kingsley Coman (L) and Duesseldorf's German midfielder Marcel Sobottka (R) vie for the ball

AFP | Berlin

Kingsley Coman played his way out of the dog house yesterday, as his first-half brace helped fire Bayern Munich back to the top of the Bundesliga with a comfortable 4-1 win at Fortuna Duesseldorf.

French winger Coman was involved in a training ground punch-up with team mate Robert Lewandowski earlier in the week, but he made the headlines for the right reasons yesterday, keeping Bayern on course for a seventh successive league title.

Bayern, needing three points to stay top after rivals Borussia Dortmund edged to a nervy win over Mainz on Saturday, barely broke a sweat as they cruised to victory on the banks of the river Rhine.

Coman's first goal was unintentional, his inswinging cross just evading Thomas Muel-

ler on its way into the bottom corner with just 14 minutes on the clock.

If the opener was briefly and incorrectly credited to Muel-ler, there was no doubt about Coman's second, a well-placed finish at the end of a delightful 41st minute move.

Serge Gnabry added a third 10 minutes after the break, turning the ball in at the far post after Mueller had flicked it on at a corner.

Dodi Lukebakio gave Duesseldorf a late consolation goal from the penalty spot after a Mats Hummels handball, but Leon Goretzka slotted in Bayern's fourth in injury time to put the cherry on the cake.

The win keeps Bayern a point ahead of Dortmund with five games still to play.

There was some bad news for the league leaders, however, as goalkeeper Manuel Neuer was forced off with an injury early in the second half.

## Djokovic quietly confident for Monte Carlo

AFP | Monte Carlo

Novak Djokovic said yesterday he is working to ensure that last month's sub-par hardcourt performances do not affect his seasonal bow on clay in Monte Carlo.

The world number one kicks off at his home event starting in the second round against either Philipp Kohlschreiber or a qualifier.

Djokovic, winner of the last three Grand Slam titles and dreaming of completing his personal sweep with another trophy at Roland Garros, was stopped in the third round at Indian Wells last month.

He was then unable to hold onto a 6-1 lead in the opening



Novak Djokovic of Serbia waves after his loss during Miami Open (file photo)

set of his fourth-rounder in Miami, going out in three to Robert Bautista Agut.

"I can't wait to step on court, I've been training hard," he said on a rainy opening day of the

"I can't wait to step on court, I've been training hard. I had a great last six months of the season. And I had an amazing start this year

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

Masters 1000.

"Some top players have been here for a week practising.

"I had a great last six months of the season, the 31-year-old Serb said. "And I had an amaz-

ing start this year.

"Indian Wells and Miami were so-so - I'll try to pick that up and see how it goes on clay."

Djokovic and 11-time winner Rafael Nadal, along with Roland Garros runner-up Dominic Thiem, stand as favourites on paper for the first major title of the French Open preliminary events.

Roger Federer, who has skipped the clay season completely for the last two years and will return to Roland Garros for the first time since a 2015 quarter-final loss to fellow Swiss Stan Wawrinka, is not playing.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion will appear in his only scheduled pre-Paris clay event in Madrid starting May 5.

## Nishikori tips Federer for clay comeback success

AFP | Monte Carlo

Roger Federer may not be playing at the Monte Carlo Masters but the Swiss legend was still at the forefront of 2018 finalist Key Nishikori's thoughts yesterday.

"Everything is possible (for Federer)," Nishikori predicted.

Federer is due for a return to the dirt after two seasons completely off the surface in three weeks at Madrid, his lone scheduled tune-up prior to the French Open, which he last played in 2015.

"It (winning Roland Garros)



Roger Federer of Switzerland poses with the winners trophy the Miami Open

might be tougher for him than winning the Australian Open or Wimbledon, but I'm sure he can do anything if he tries 100 per

cent," said Nishikori. "He's a lot different than anyone else on the Tour," added the world number three who

lost the final here a year ago as Rafael Nadal won his 11th title in the principality.

"I'm sure Roger can do very well on clay. He's still my idol, he's the best player in history.

"I'm happy to see him playing more tournaments, I hope I can play him again," said the player who has beaten the 37-year-old Swiss three times and most recently last November at the year-end ATP Finals.

"He came from injury and won the Australian Open (2017). I'm sure he works harder than anyone else off court. I hope he does well," Nishikori said.