

# Verstappen denies Hamilton in French thriller

Max Verstappen triumphs in pulsating duel with Lewis Hamilton at French GP

● Red Bull driver hunts down rival to overtake in penultimate lap

● Sergio Perez completes podium with Bottas fourth

AFP | Paris

Max Verstappen won the French Grand Prix yesterday to extend his lead over Lewis Hamilton in the Formula One drivers' title race.

The Red Bull driver hunted down and overtook the Mercedes world champion with over a lap to go at a gusty Le Castellet to claim his third win out of seven races this season.

"Towards the end I enjoyed it! At the beginning it was super difficult out there with the wind," said Verstappen.

This was a massive statement by the Dutch driver and his resurgent Red Bull team who won their third successive race after Monaco and Baku.

It pushed Verstappen 12 points clear of Hamilton ahead of back-to-back races on Red Bull turf in Austria.

Sergio Perez in the other Red Bull came in third with Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes finishing fourth.

Red Bull team principal



Max Verstappen crosses the line to win the French Grand Prix

Christian Horner had said before the race "if we can beat them here we can beat them anywhere" of Mercedes, who were itching to get back onto a regular track like the circuit Paul Ricard after getting lost on the streets of Monaco and Baku.

But things got off to a bumpy beginning for pole sitter Verstappen, who went off the track in a horror start coming out of turn one, Hamilton accepting the unexpected gift to take the lead.

"I couldn't keep the car under control," complained Verstappen.

Hamilton had led 105 of the 106 laps for his wins here in 2018 and 2019, and he set about

extending his near total stranglehold at the Provençal track.

Approaching a third of the 53-lap race Hamilton had established a near three second gap back to Verstappen, with Bottas and Perez in pursuit.

With drivers starting to complain of tyre wear Charles Leclerc was the first to come into the pits for a change of footwear for his Ferrari.

Verstappen wasn't far behind, with Hamilton coming in for a slick stop on lap 20, coming out as Verstappen flashed past with Perez, still to pit, the new leader.

The Mexican, winner in Baku last time out, was hauled in on lap 25, leaving Verstappen in the lead and Hamilton half a second

behind.

"We can't keep this up until the end of the race that's for sure" Verstappen told his pits over the team radio referring to tyres on lap 29.

And on lap 32 in he came in again, resuming in fourth, 25sec behind Hamilton, but with better grip he was only seven seconds behind in third by lap 40.

With nine laps to go Verstappen muscled past Bottas, the gap ahead to Hamilton just five seconds.

Hunting his prey down it made for an epic end and he duly picked off the Silver Arrows on the penultimate lap to trigger wild celebrations in the Red Bull garage.

"The whole race me and Lewis were fighting each other, so it will be like this the rest of the season," Verstappen said.



Verstappen now has a 12-point lead in the championship and his team a 37-point advantage over Mercedes in the constructors'

Barca move will give Depay 'something extra' - Dutch coach De Boer



Netherlands' forward Memphis Depay hugs Netherlands' coach Frank de Boer (L) as he leaves the pitch during a match

AFP | Amsterdam

Netherlands coach Frank de Boer is hopeful Memphis Depay's Euro 2020 form will be positively impacted after the confirmation the striker will play for Barcelona next season.

Depay has long been linked with a move to the Camp Nou and on Saturday Barcelona announced the 27-year-old had signed a two-year deal to join on a free transfer from Lyon.

"Maybe the transfer to Barcelona will give him something extra to help him perform at his best," De Boer told reporters ahead of the Dutch team's final Euro 2020 Group C game against North Macedonia in Amsterdam yesterday.

"We need Memphis at his best to go as far as we want in this tournament but we have confidence in him and he is a confident player."

Depay, who scored 20 goals in Ligue 1 for Lyon in the season just finished, converted a penalty in the Netherlands' 2-0 win over Austria on Thursday in front of watching Barcelona



coach Ronald Koeman.

However he has come in for some criticism from some Dutch fans and media for failing to take other chances.

"I think Memphis is his first critic and I'm sure the criticism doesn't affect him," De Boer said of the former Manchester United player, who is a huge star in the Netherlands.

"He knows if he played well or not so let's hope for the Netherlands that he can reach the level that we have in mind."

The Oranje have already secured qualification for the last 16 as winners of Group C after beating both Ukraine and Austria in their first major tournament since the 2014 World Cup.

## Shaqiri shines as Swiss beat Turkey to keep Euro 2020 hopes alive

AFP | Baku

Xherdan Shaqiri scored two superb goals as Switzerland secured third place in Group A at Euro 2020 with a 3-1 win over Turkey, but they now face an anxious wait to see if they will reach the last 16.

The six-time world champion, who returned this season after crashing in the opening race last year, escaped early and stayed clear of in-form Portuguese Miguel Oliveira and championship leader Fabio Quartararo.

Marquez started on the second row of the grid but burst through at the start and was battling for the lead with fellow Spaniard Aleix Espargaro of Aprilia when rain started to fall.

While other riders grew more cautious, Marquez reacted by attacking harder.

"The victory was a low possibility, but when I saw a few drops on laps four and five I thought: 'this is my race,'" he said.

"When more drops fall, I pushed more. I take a risk. Then the second race started with Oliveira."

Catalonia GP winner Oliveira emerged from the pack to give chase but was more than a second back.

The laps followed a consistent pattern.

Marquez, who is still recovering from the complicated break



Xherdan Shaqiri (C) of Switzerland celebrates with team-mates after scoring



Having finished the group behind Wales on goal difference, Switzerland must now hope to progress as one of the best third-placed finishers

to his right arm, gained time turning left and lost time on right-handers. But he managed to preserve a cushion of more than a second.

"It was a little cat and mouse all race," said Oliveira. "He was faster in some sectors, I was faster in others. We battled at a distance."

Marquez held on for what was clearly an emotional victory.

"It was hard to concentrate because of all the memories and all the sensations of the past year," said Marquez, pausing to avoid breaking down and to maintain the delighted grin on his face.

It was his 11th straight victory at the Sachsenring, which like him was off the MotoGP circuit last season, but it was the first for him and the Honda team since Valencia in November 2019.

## Berrettini emulates Becker in winning Queen's crown

AFP | London

Top seed Matteo Berrettini became the first debutant since Boris Becker in 1985 to win the Queen's tournament, beating Briton Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 yesterday.

The 25-year-old Italian may have dropped his first set of the week but his booming serve held up with 19 aces bombarding Norrie as he secured his fifth ATP title.

Becker went on to win his first Wimbledon title aged just 17 weeks later but Berrettini, 25, was happy solely to focus yesterday's victory.

"This is the nicest trophy for sure with all due respect to the others I have won," said Berrettini, who won 45 successive service games after being broken twice in the first round.

"It has been an unbelievable week if I think about his (Becker) name and my name on the same board it is crazy.

"I dreamed about playing in this tournament as I watched it as a kid."

Berrettini, ranked ninth in the world and one of 10 Italians in the top 100, paid tribute to his opponent.

"He is a great player. We had never played each other before but he showed this year he can play on all surfaces.

"Today I am happy for myself for sure (he grinned).

"In the rallies Norrie is dangerous so it was important to have my service in order.

"These courts are really nice



Italy's Matteo Berrettini celebrates with the trophy

"This is the nicest trophy for sure with all due respect to the others I have won"

MATTEO BERRETTINI

and easy to adapt to even if the weather was English for the last days of the week."

Berrettini -- the first Italian to win the title -- said his entourage might force him to enjoy a restrained celebration.

"Probably room service and sparkling water," he said.

Norrie will rise to 34 in the world rankings and took defeat in a sporting spirit.

"All credit to Matteo, he was too good today and better on the big points. You are having a great career keep it up," he said.

"If you had told me before the tournament I would be in

the final I would have been surprised.

"It has been a very special week. I am a little bit disappointed I did not get the title today but we will keep pushing for more."

The Italian looked comfortably in control after taking the first set with just the one break at 2-2 when Norrie double-faulted.

However, the Briton looked a different player once he saved two break points at 4-4 in the second set.

The 25-year-old South Africa-born Norrie tried to draw Berrettini into longer rallies -- when he was able to return the Italian's booming 140mph (225km/h) serves -- as he generally came out best in them.

His resilience paid off as in the tie break he got a mini-break to go 2-0 up and held on to it winning 7-5 when Berrettini sent a forehand long.