

# Raikkonen happy to prove doubters wrong

AFP | Austin, United States

**K**imi Raikkonen insists he has no plans for a special celebration after he "proved some people wrong" by winning Sunday's United States Grand Prix.

The Finn, whose victory for a resurgent Ferrari prevented Lewis Hamilton from clinching his fifth drivers' title in Texas, is leaving the Italian team at the end of the season and, at the age of 39, had been written off in some quarters.

But he never lost self-belief and made the most of his chance at the Circuit of the Americas with a faultless drive and flawless strategy as his rivals floundered around him.

It was his first win in more than five years and 113 races dating back to the 2013 Australian Grand Prix – and his first win for Ferrari since 2009.

He returns to Sauber, where he started his career in 2001, on a two-year contract next season.

"I'm happy for that," he said. "It was a great day to prove some people wrong and have a good race, but it doesn't really change anything for me.

"It's just a number. Life goes on...."



Lewis Hamilton climbs out of his Mercedes car as Kimi Raikkonen is congratulated by Ferrari fans

"I might be getting older, but it's not too bad still. Maybe I'm ok to be around a few years more.

"I enjoy it, so we are here to try to win. I always try to do it, but obviously it's not easy otherwise anybody could do it.

"I think this weekend we have been pretty solid in many ways. I just had a good feeling with

the car."

The laconic racer added that his young children were unlikely to be too excited.

"They've been asking for a while, but they're more interested in the Pirelli cap than probably a win itself," he said.

"I know that we can buy it also, but I know it's not fair play to bring them if I had to buy it...

"The kids probably fell asleep during the race, but the wife probably looked at it. I'm more than happy for all of us. It's nice."

As a near-deadpan Raikkonen smiled, Hamilton, who failed to outscore fourth-placed Sebastian Vettel by eight points, the tally needed to seal the world title, conceded that Mercedes near-metronomic consistency

had let him down with a poor choice of tyres and strategy.

He also pointed out that it was difficult to pass second placed Max Verstappen and the victorious Raikkonen to deliver his sixth win in seven visits to Texas.

## Too much space

"Honestly, I was trying to win the race, but you look at the two

guys next to me -- they're not fighting for a championship so I had to be very, very careful how I navigated around them," he explained.

"Championships are not won by fighting and making silly mistakes."

Hamilton made several efforts to pass Verstappen in the closing laps, but was unable to find a way past him.

"I gave him way too much space just to be sure that I didn't get clipped, for example, and didn't get taken out," he said, adding that he feared the Dutchman may understeer into him or defend his position with more aggression.

"The key for me was that I finished ahead of Seb and for me it doesn't matter when you win the championship as long as you get it done," he said.

"Ultimately, we wanted to win the race today and I think going backwards two steps is not a good result, but you can't win them all."

Hamilton will become only the third five-time champion in the sport if Vettel wins and he finishes in the top seven in Mexico next weekend or if Vettel fails to win.

## Vettel: Ferrari too slow to recognise mistakes



Sebastian Vettel spun off the track on the first lap after an incident with Daniel Ricciardo

AFP | Austin, United States

**S**ebastian Vettel welcomed Ferrari's return to form in Sunday's United States Grand Prix, but said the team had taken too long to realise the mistakes in its development programme.

The four-time champion German, who kept alive his faint title hopes by finishing fourth behind championship leader Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes, said the team did not understand what was wrong with their upgrades.

Ferrari abandoned their recent updates and reverted to older car specifications at the Circuit of the Americas and were rewarded with Kimi Raikkonen's first win for the team since 2009.

Vettel's hopes of a victory to reboot his title bid were wrecked when he clashed with Daniel Ricciardo's Red Bull on

the opening lap.

Of Ferrari's victory, he said: "You can see it is good news, but you can also see it is bad news. It took too long.

"If we have to go back to a car that has been competitive three or four months ago, then surely it cannot be good news if you think about it?"

"For us, on the technical side, it is important to understand what went wrong...."

He said there was no easy explanation.

"Certainly, we felt that the car was not as strong as it was before, but if you don't see there is anything wrong, then you don't know that there is something wrong.

"All the steps that we did, they seemed to make sense, but looking back they didn't. Clearly, there was something we missed and we haven't understood, yet, why and where the error exactly took off."

# We made it hard for ourselves, says Hamilton

AFP | Austin, United States

**L**ewis Hamilton said Mercedes made life difficult for themselves with a cautious race strategy in Sunday's United States Grand Prix.

The 33-year-old Briton, who finished third, but missed out on clinching his fifth drivers' title, told reporters that he was surprised when he was called in for an early pit-stop to take advantage of a Virtual Safety Car intervention on lap 11.

"It was a little bit of a surprise," said the Mercedes man after finishing third.

"And once we'd done the stop on 11, I knew I would be doing



**Lewis Hamilton finished third, but missed out on clinching his fifth drivers' title as he was called in for an early pit-stop to take advantage of a Virtual Safety Car intervention on lap 11**



Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton waves to fans during the United States Grand Prix

a two-stop.

"We just made it so hard for ourselves. When we came out, I had to catch Kimi, I caught him, but my tyres were dead.

"Then he did his stop and was catching me with fresh tyres -- and then I came out, after the last stop, and had 12 seconds to catch up. It just made it so hard for us even to compete today."

He added that he was also not

sure that he started the race on the best tyre.

"I think it already started from Q2, that tyre was the wrong tyre to start on. We knew there was a big difference in start performance on these different tyres, yet we fell for something that we already knew was potentially not the way forward.

"I lost position to Kimi and then I wasn't able to keep up

because he had clean air and a better tyre.

"It was definitely a lesson learned, I think, for us. Performance-wise, it wasn't our greatest weekend, but we've had some incredible weekends this year.

"Still, to get a third, I'm still grateful, but naturally, starting first and finishing third is never a good thing."