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Formula 1™ drivers weigh in on Austin Grand Prix one week before the race

AUSTIN, Texas (Nov. 7, 2013) – With just one week to go until Formula 1™ teams and drivers descend on Austin, Texas, to prepare for the **2013 FORMULA 1 UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX**, Circuit of The Americas' F1™ correspondent **Dan Knutson** caught up with the men who will compete for fortune and glory at the United States new home for premier motorsports and entertainment. Here's what some of them had to say about last year's inaugural race, the city of Austin, and about heading back to Texas for this year's F1 USGP.

Driver: Sebastian Vettel

Nationality: German

Team: Infiniti Red Bull Racing

Fast Fact: Sebastian Vettel has just wrapped up his fourth consecutive FIA Formula One World Drivers' Championship. At age 26, he is the youngest four-time F1 champion in history.

"It was fantastic last year. It was great to see that there were so many people. Really the special thing that we enjoy, apart from the track itself, is that the whole city was living the Grand Prix. You could feel that there was a special vibe and that everyone was looking forward to the event. I think it was generally very positive. We obviously look forward to going there again. The track is tricky, very challenging, mixed, with high speed and slow corners. It was nice to be on the podium last year, nice to get a different kind of hat. We'll try to do it again."

Driver: Lewis Hamilton

Nationality: British

Team: Mercedes AMG Petronas

Fast Fact: Lewis Hamilton won the inaugural **FORMULA 1 UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX** at the Circuit of The Americas last year. After six years with Vodafone McLaren Mercedes, he switched to the Mercedes AMG Petronas team in 2013.

"Personally I had a great time there last year. I had some family there and overall it was a really nice weekend. We went out to dinner each night, which is very rare for me. The food was great. The atmosphere felt nice in the city, it felt a bit like Montreal in terms of a good group of people being in town. And they put on a great show. The track was nice once you got used to it, and once it started to 'grip up' it was fantastic to drive. I am looking forward to going back. I'd love to go back there and have a win. I love the track. What a turnout we had last year! It was one of the best races of the whole year. To come in on the first year and be one of the best races of the year was pretty spectacular."

Driver: Sergio Pérez

Nationality: Mexican

Team: Vodafone McLaren Mercedes

Fast Fact: After spending his first two Formula 1 seasons with the Sauber F1 team, Sergio Pérez joined Vodafone McLaren Mercedes in 2013.

"It is very close to my home, so I'm really looking forward to being there. It was a very special Grand Prix for me last year, so I expect this year's race to definitely be special. Like last year, I think we will see a lot of Mexican fans at the race this year as well. I am amazed with the support I am getting from my country even though I am having such a bad year



together with McLaren. For us it is very good because we have two Mexican drivers. I absolutely liked the track. It is a great track. It is so difficult to get the perfect lap out there, with the high speed and the blind corners like Turn 1. The start is very interesting as well. I definitely enjoy it."

Driver: Esteban Gutiérrez

Nationality: Mexican

Team: Sauber F1 Team

Fast Fact: Rookie Esteban Gutiérrez was born in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

"I am very much looking forward to it. It will be a great experience to share all of this together with all the Mexicans and friends that will be there. It will be one of the most special feelings in my career. If we can achieve something there it will be great."

Driver: Nico Rosberg

Nationality: German

Team: Mercedes AMG Petronas

Fast Fact: Nico's father, Keke Rosberg, won the **1984 United States Grand Prix staged in Dallas, Texas.**

"Austin is one of my favorite races. A cool track; a great city and everything; a very unique place. It's nice to see that it was one of the most in-demand races in terms of spectators coming to the racetrack. That's fantastic."

Driver: Felipe Massa

Nationality: Brazilian

Team: Scuderia Ferrari

Fast Fact: This will be Felipe Massa's second-to-last race with Scuderia Ferrari. He's raced for the team since 2006.

"I love it; it is a very nice track. It's a nice place. I love the city; I love the people, so I hope we can have a nice race there."

Driver: Fernando Alonso

Nationality: Spanish

Team: Scuderia Ferrari

Fast Fact: Fernando Alonso was the FIA Formula One World Drivers' Champion in 2005 and 2006.

"It is fantastic. I think the circuit was really nice to discover last year. It is a nice circuit to drive. The atmosphere is great because the American culture is a little bit more open for contact with the fans and to experience a little bit how they enjoy the weekend. And also the city, which that weekend is full of Mexicans that support F1 a lot. There is a good mix of cultures there. And it was good weekend."

Driver: Romain Grosjean

Nationality: French

Team: Lotus F1 Team

Fast Fact: Romain Grosjean has been on a roll recently. He has had three third-place finishes and a fourth-place finish in the last four races.



"The city at night is very good; the bars are cool. The track is pretty nice. It is a nice layout. It takes the best of most of the tracks that we know. We were pretty quick there last year so hopefully it is going to be the case again."

Driver: Kimi Räikkönen

Nationality: Finnish

Team: Lotus F1 Team

Fast Fact: After spending the past two seasons with the Lotus F1 Team, Kimi Räikkönen is heading back to Scuderia Ferrari in 2014. He won the FIA Formula One World Championship with Ferrari in 2007.

"It was a nice circuit. The layout is quite nice, and we had good racing there last year. It was a nice new place, a lot of people, and it was good for the United States to have the race in a popular place."

Driver: Mark Webber

Nationality: Australian

Team: Infiniti Red Bull Racing

Fast Fact: The FORMULA 1 UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX will be Mark Webber's second-to-last F1 race. After 12 years in F1 racing, he is retiring from the series and will compete in the World Endurance Championship with Porsche in 2014.

"Texas is big, mate. The layout of the circuit is phenomenal; they have done a very good job with that. The first sector is pretty amazing. The first year they did a good job. There was a nice atmosphere in downtown Austin. It is a bit of a favorite of mine because I have lot of friends there. I enjoy going to the race."

Driver: Daniel Ricciardo

Nationality: Australian

Team: Scuderia Toro Rosso

Fast Fact: Daniel Ricciardo has landed the coveted Infiniti Red Bull Racing seat and will replace fellow Australian Mark Webber in 2014.

"I really enjoyed Austin. It was my first time to America last year for the race; I'd never been there before. So that was fun. The people around the city were really, really friendly. The city is cool. I love the whole music scene. I definitely want to spend some time there, and in the days before the race go and see some live local music acts, have some American beer, and just 'be' an American for a night. The track itself is really good. The amount of spectators that we got there last year was awesome. You see the people on the roofs of the motorhomes waving to us on the drivers' parade. It is sort of like what you see when you watch NASCAR on TV."

Driver: Jenson Button

Nationality: British

Team: Vodafone McLaren Mercedes

Fast Fact: Jenson Button won the in 2009 FIA Formula One World Drivers' Championship.

"It is a great circuit. It is one of the better new circuits. There is a real flow to sector 1, which is great. And there are a few slow corners where we can overtake. It is great race. There was a full house last year—a lot of American fans and probably even more fans from Mexico. It was a really good atmosphere, and hopefully it is a race that can grow over the years. It has been difficult for us to break into America in the past, but we seem to be doing a pretty good job at the moment."



Driver: Pastor Maldonado

Nationality: Venezuelan

Team: Williams F1 Team

Fast Fact: Along with Mexico's Sergio Perez and Esteban Gutierrez and Brazil's Felipe Massa, Venezuela's Pastor Maldonado is one of four drivers from the Americas competing in the 2013 FORMULA 1 UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX at the Circuit of The Americas.

"Nice track, nice city, nice race. One of the best [races] of the year. We will enjoy it. I really love that weekend."

About Circuit of The Americas

Circuit of The Americas in Austin, Texas, is a world-class destination for premium sports and entertainment. It is the first racing facility in the United States purposely built for Formula 1™ racing and is designed to host a variety of sports and entertainment events. The Circuit is home to the **FORMULA 1 UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX**, which was named the 2012 **"Sports Event of the Year"** by *SportsBusiness Journal/Daily*, and is the new North American host of the summer edition of **ESPN's X Games**. Additionally Circuit of The Americas welcomes spectators from around the world for some of the most prestigious national and international motorsports series, including MotoGP™, V8 Supercars™, GRAND-AM Road Racing™, American Le Mans and the FIA World Endurance Championships.

Circuit of The Americas' 1,500-acre campus includes a variety of permanent structures designed for business, education, entertainment and sporting use. Its signature 3.4-mile, 20-turn undulating racetrack features remarkable elevation changes and a number of challenging turns patterned after some of the world's iconic Grand Prix tracks. The **Austin360 Amphitheater** is an expansive outdoor live music space, featuring the largest permanent stage in Central Texas and the capacity for 14,000 guests. The Circuit's iconic 25-story Observation Tower has a viewing platform offering 360-degree views of the venue, downtown Austin and Texas Hill Country. The 44,000-square foot **Event Center** offers an expansive convention and banquet space that doubles as an international Media Center during sports and entertainment event. The Event Center includes more than 30 broadcast booths, an internal café and dedicated news conference room. The Circuit's massive **Main Grandstand** features permanent seating for 9,000, a variety of well-appointed suites, and the Velocity Lounge and hospitality area. Circuit of The Americas also offers a state-of-the-art on-site medical facility, parking for 25,000 vehicles, taxi and shuttle bus depots and a permanent heli-stop. For more information and downloadable video, audio and photos, visit: www.CircuitofTheAmericas.com, www.Austin360Amphitheater.com or the Circuit's dedicated FTP site, media.circuitoftheamericas.com.

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