



Circuit Notes

by Peter Hubbard

Vettel's eighth straight victory sets new record

AUSTIN, TX (Nov. 17, 2013) – Infiniti Red Bull Racing's Sebastian Vettel barely broke a sweat as he started from the pole and led virtually the entire 56-lap race on his way to setting a new Formula 1™ record for consecutive wins, with eight in row. His unprecedented winning streak began on Aug. 25, when he took the checkered flag at the Belgium Grand Prix. That was followed by wins in Italy, Singapore, Korea, Japan, India and Abu Dhabi.

He celebrated by doing “doughnuts” on the track, to the delight of the crowd, just as he had two weeks ago when he secured the 2013 Driver's Championship – his fourth in a row – following the win in India.

Sunday's victory snapped the previous record of seven straight wins, set by countryman Michael Schumacher back in 2004. Should the 26-year-old German win again next week in Brazil, he would match Schumacher's record of 13 wins in a season, also achieved nine years ago. By taking the 2013 FORMULA 1 UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX, the second to be held at Circuit of the Americas, the Hungarian Grand Prix is only remaining race on the current F1 calendar that Vettel hasn't won during his brief career.

In what seemed like just another routine day at the office, Vettel relinquished the lead only briefly during his lone pit stop of the day on lap 27, when he switched from medium to hard Pirelli P Zero tires. Lotus F1's Romain Grosjean led for a lap or so, but Vettel pulled back in front when Grosjean subsequently pitted to take on new tires. Vettel finished the race 6.284 seconds ahead Grosjean and 8.396 seconds faster than teammate Mark Webber's.

Grosjean moved ahead of Webber from his third spot on the grid at the top of Turn 1 in the beginning of the first lap and held on to claim second place and his sixth podium of the year. The second-place trophy was the first of Grosjean's 44-race F1 racing career. He has yet to win a race, but has placed third five different times this year, most recently at last month's Indian Grand Prix.

Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, winner of last year's F1 USGP, also passed Webber on Turn 1, pushing him back to fourth at that point. But Webber later reclaimed the third spot on lap 13 when Hamilton's tires started losing grip.

Unlike last year's race, which was conducted without a single caution, the yellow flag was unfurled on the very first lap, and held drivers in place for the next five laps. The reason: Adrian Sutil, driving for Sahara Force India, had a very early end to his afternoon when he made contact with Williams' Pastor Maldonado and lost control between Turns 9 and 10, crashing his car into the barrier.

Fifth was claimed Scuderia Ferrari's Fernando Alonso and sixth by Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg, who dropped two spots from his fourth-place qualifying spot.

Sauber might have had an even more successful afternoon if its young Mexican driver, Esteban Gutierrez, had not been penalized 10 grid spots for impeding Williams' Pastor Maldonado during Saturday's qualifying. So instead of starting 10th, the rookie was pushed back to the 20th spot. However, he aggressively worked his way through the field and reached as high as eighth by lap 30, when drivers began their pit stops. He made a last-lap attempt to move up to 12th, but was briefly forced off the track during his failed attempt to pass Toro Rosso's Jean-Eric Vergne.



An examination by stewards added resulted in race official adding 20 seconds to Vergne's time dropping him down to 16th instead of 12th, which shifted Gutierrez up to 13th, one spot behind Ferrari's Felipe Massa.

His countryman, McLaren's Sergio Perez fared better, however, finishing seventh, just ahead of another rookie driver, Williams' Valtteri Bottas. Bottas with four points to his credit after finishing eighth, joins Gutierrez as one of two rookies to score points this year. Yet to crack the top 10 are Marussia's two rookies, Jules Bianchi and Max Chilton, and Caterham's Giedo van der Garde.

The ninth spot was claimed by Mercedes Nico Rosberg, who fought his way up from 14th on the grid, and finished among the top 10 once again, a feat he has accomplished in all but one of the races he's completed this year. The only race in which he failed to score a point was the Hungarian Grand Prix. Given Vettel's dominance, Rosberg and Alonso are the only two drivers with more than one win on the season. Rosberg's came at Monaco and Silverstone and Alonso's in China and Spain.

Like Mercedes, McLaren had both of its drivers finish in the points, as Jenson Button edged out Toro Rosso's Daniel Ricciardo to claim the final point of the race.

NOTES:

- Perhaps to no one's surprise, pole sitter and race winner Sebastian Vettel, also posted the fastest lap time of the day in his Infiniti Red Bull car – at 1:39.856. However, he was slightly faster last year, so his time of 1:39.347 in 2012 remains as the race lap record at Circuit of The Americas.
- By missing the final two races of the season, Lotus F1's Kimi Raikkonen lost his grip on third place in the driver's point standings. Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, with the 12 points he earned for finishing fourth in Sunday's race, now has 187 – four more than the Finn's 183. Webber also has a chance to overtake Raikkonen before season's end. The 15 points added to his total by coming in third put him just two behind at 181. Ferrari's Fernando Alonso maintained his firm grip on second place. His fifth-place finish added 10 points to his total, giving him 227 for the year.
- Heikki Kovalainen, who is replacing Lotus F1's Kimi Raikkonen for the final two races of the 2013 season, performed quite well in practice and managed to secure the eighth slot on the grid for Lotus. However, he made two pit stops during the race as opposed to just one for the leading drivers, which caused him to drop seven spots during the race to finish a disappointing 14th on the day.
- With Hamilton finishing fourth and Rosberg ninth in Sunday race, Mercedes AMG Petronas strengthened its hold on second place over its two closest rivals in the Constructor's Championship standings. Mercedes now has 348 points, Ferrari 333, and Lotus by 315.
- Austin is not the only city in Texas to have hosted a Formula 1 race. In 1984, Dallas hosted the United States Grand Prix on a specially prepared street circuit. Circuit of The Americas is one of just six road courses that have hosted the United States Grand Prix. Others include the race tracks at Sebring, Fla. (1959), Riverside, Calif. (1960), Watkins Glen, N.Y. (1961-1980), Phoenix, Ariz. (1989-1991) and Indianapolis, Ind. (2000-2007). Indianapolis also plays host to the Indy 500 each year, which was included as a round of the Formula 1™ world championship between 1950 and 1960. Four other American cities have hosted rounds of the world championship under different race titles. They are: Long Beach, Calif. (1976-83), Las Vegas, Nev. (1981-82), Detroit, Mich. (1982-88) and Dallas, Texas (1984).

QUOTES:



SEBASTIAN VETTEL, Infiniti Red Bull Racing:

“Setting the new record feels incredible. I think it’s one of those things that you never expect to... one of those records that you never expect to set, so it’s very difficult to find the right words. I didn’t really answer the questions the last couple of days because at the end of the day what makes me jump into the car is not a certain number. But certainly today, when you realize what you’ve done it, it makes you very proud in that moment. I think it’s very difficult for all of us to realize what this actually means right now. If you look back, and if you look at those names, who had similar records or outstanding performances in the past, I think it’s impossible to understand. People look back and they talk about that time and about certain drivers and one day people might look back and talk about our time and what we’ve done as a team.

“I was very happy once I was in the lead after turn one. Obviously I had to wait a little bit with the safety car before I could unleash the pace, but certainly it’s a great feeling when you do pull away, and then it’s about pacing yourself, pacing yourself to get the range, to look after the tires, etc. Certainly there are a lot of things going on (during the race) but also it’s a nice feeling to have a little bit of a gap because you can take it a little bit easier in some crucial places, to look after the tires and benefit from that, especially later on in the stint. Overall, you do tend to have quite a bit of work in the car... it is a Sunday afternoon drive but not in that regard.”

ROMAIN GROSJEAN, Lotus F1:

“That was a really tough race. I had to have probably one of my best ever drives to keep Mark [Webber] behind and it’s a great feeling to have tamed at least one of the Bulls in Texas as they clearly had the fastest package today. We knew a good start would be the key, so making up one place in the first corner was really important and the car was just fantastic from there onwards. The whole team here and back at Enstone are doing an amazing job. Every day I see them working hard together to keep us at the front and when you look at the gap to the next nearest challenger, it’s clear that we’re the second best team after Red Bull right now. I think this place must bring me luck; this time last year I found out my wife was pregnant and now I’ve equaled my best finish in Formula 1, so I can’t wait to come back again and see what happens next year!”

MARK WEBBER, Infiniti Red Bull Racing:

“I was very happy with how I drove today. You want to be on the outside for Turn 1 but Romain was already there. I think I made a very good start from the left hand side, which is not the easiest to do here, so we did what we could. Lewis also was on the outside for clean braking so I had to be a little bit careful with Sebastian on the inside. And then you’ve got to clear people and you know when you’ve got to clear people you use tires, you use everything up. Romain drove a very good race today. He was very strong in the last part of the first sector which you need to be in order to get out of there. It was super-super difficult to stay close. I did what I could for most of the time but also the tires were screaming at me for lap after lap, so I had to drop back, give them a breather, go again. So, yeah, I drove a pretty clean race. I think the performance and pace were very strong from my side.”

LEWIS HAMILTON, Mercedes AMG Petronas:

“That felt good out there this afternoon and I’m really happy with fourth place. It was so nice to have a race where I could fight for position and make progress. The car felt much better today than it has recently, so the change in chassis has definitely made a difference. I owe a big thanks to my guys in the garage for their efforts there. I had a great start today and that was crucial to my race. We had to give up third place to Mark fairly easily to make sure our tire management and



strategy worked, since it was more important for the team to finish ahead of Ferrari. There was no way I was letting Fernando past at the end. I was ready for him to make his move and had a couple of tenths ready to pull out if he did! We've had a few difficult races on my side of the garage and I'm so proud of the team for all the hard work they have put in. We're all determined to maintain our second place at the final race in Brazil next weekend."

FERNANDO ALONZO, Scuderia Ferrari:

"Finishing in the top five today is a very positive result when you consider how difficult this weekend has been and the fact I had to start from the dirty side of the track. We were well aware it would be very difficult to maintain position and in fact I lost it to Perez. In the first part of the race, we weren't quick and we decided to save the tires and then attack around the pit stop. We were more competitive on the hards; we passed Perez and set off to get Hulkenberg, but even if our situation compared to Mercedes has improved, we were unable to beat them. I am very proud of this second place in the Drivers' Championship, it's a small reward for me, the same as being first of the 'mortals,' behind Red Bull. I have three days to rest and arrive in Brazil feeling 100 percent. We really must improve there, because our goal is still to finish second in the Constructor's Championship."

NICO HULKENBERG, Sauber F1:

"It was a very solid result yet again today. If I'm not mistaken, since Monza that would have been the eighth points finish in a row (for Sauber) if it wasn't for the brake disc failure in India and the drive through in Abu Dhabi. That's a pretty impressive statistic. It was an interesting race. I didn't have to fight that much, only at the end with Fernando (Alonso), which was good fun. Unfortunately in the crucial part of the race, about 10 to 15 laps before the end, we didn't quite have the pace of Fernando, so he was able to overtake me. During the last lap going into Turn 1 I passed him, but then I just missed the apex and he was able to get me back at the exit. But we finished just a couple of seconds behind our competitors. I think it's been a good weekend with a gain of a good eight points."

ESTEBAN GUTIERREZ, Sauber F1:

"It was a very tough race starting from P20. We had to make up a lot of positions on the track as a result of the penalty. I managed a good first lap. I made up a couple of positions and then, once the safety car was deployed, we decided to pit in order to put me on a different strategy from the other cars. We need to analyze the situation now and see how much we gained from that. I think, all in all, the problems came from the 10-place grid penalty, which made it very complicated at the end."

SERGIO PEREZ, Vodafone McLaren Mercedes:

"To be honest, I was expecting to achieve a little bit more than seventh today. On the opening lap, I managed to push past Fernando [Alonso], and the car initially felt pretty strong. After that, however, between about lap 10 and lap 15, the tire degradation started to kick in, and we struggled relative to the others around us. They seemed to be coping with the degradation a little bit better than we were. But, more importantly, I want to say a big 'thank you' to all my Mexican and American fans for the support they've shown me all weekend. They came here to watch me perform, and, while I would love with all my heart to have given them a better result than seventh, it was still amazing to have their support throughout what has been a difficult but very special weekend."



VALTTERI BOTTAS, Williams F1:

“I’m very happy to get my first points in Formula 1™ today. The whole weekend has been good, from setting up the car in practice, through to the strategy and pit stops during the race. We managed the tires well today and I had good feedback from my engineers on them throughout. We did have a bit of pressure from Nico Rosberg at the end, but I was able to keep pushing and hold onto the position. I want to say a big ‘thanks’ to everyone in the team and at the factory. They have all been working so hard and really deserve this result.”

ADRIAN SUTIL, Sahara Force India:

“It feels like I ran out of luck this weekend. Up until Saturday morning I was looking competitive and was happy with the car, but all of that promise disappeared with the problems we had in qualifying. In the race I made a good start, gained a few positions and was racing ahead of Maldonado on the back straight. For some reason he hit my left rear wheel and I immediately lost control of the car and crashed into the barriers. I don’t really understand why he was so close to me because the track is so wide there. I stayed on my line and there was a lot of space to the right and the left. So it was an early finish and a very disappointing day.”

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