

Sports

Texas offers Hamilton his first shot at fifth title

Hamilton is 67 points clear of Ferrari's Vettel with three races

AUSTIN: It will be high fives for Lewis Hamilton in Austin on Sunday if a fifth win in a row brings the Briton a fifth Formula One world title. The Mercedes driver is on the brink of joining the late Argentine Juan Manuel Fangio as a quintuple champion, with only seven times titleholder Michael Schumacher ahead of them in the all-time lists.

Hamilton is 67 points clear of Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel with three races—and a maximum 75 points—remaining after Texas. That means the title will be Hamilton's if he scores eight points more than the German, something the Briton has done for the past four races and a total of eight times in the 17 grands prix so far.

On paper, with Hamilton and Finnish team mate Valtteri Bottas one-two in the last two races and the champion triumphant in five of the past six races at the Circuit of the Americas—including the last four—the title is there for the taking.

Hamilton has won five races in a row before, in 2014 when the sequence involved the same five as this time, and is in the form of his life with nine wins so far this season. He has been busy with media activities in New York this week but his focus on the main task ahead remains laser sharp.

"With six race victories in the last seven races,

Lewis has shown what a class act he is," Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said this week. "Both on and off the track he is more complete than ever before, showing commanding performance in the car and challenging the entire team to perform to higher levels at the same time.

"The battle is far from over, so we approach Austin the same way as every other race: take it one step at a time, focus on our job and make sure we bring performance and reliability to the track," added the Austrian.

The only other driver to have won in Austin to date is Vettel with Red Bull in 2013 — and he arrives with plenty of criticism of his performance in Japan after he started eighth, dropped to 19th and finished sixth.

Like Hamilton a four times champion, Vettel has failed to finish in the top two for four races and has slumped from title frontrunner to also-ran. "We know it's difficult from where we are but what do we have to lose?" the German said after the Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka.

"We are trying our utmost to fight and resist and let's see what the next races bring." Mercedes also lead the constructors' championship by 78 points but cannot yet wrap up their fifth successive team title, with that battle going on at least until Mexico the following weekend. —Reuters



Lewis Hamilton

Burgan Bank congratulates Wheelchair Fencing title holder Tareq Al-Qallaf

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the leading contributors to the continued progress of the Kuwaiti community and its talented individuals, congratulated World Wheelchair Fencing Champion title holder, Tareq Al-Qallaf, for successfully bringing home three gold medals. Competing in the Milwaukee Open Championship, Al-Qallaf scored gold in the Foil, Epee and Sabre categories, and was also named 'Best Fencing Champion'.

This is the fourth consecutive year that Burgan Bank sponsors and supports the homegrown World Champion as he proudly represents Kuwait on global grounds. Through its support of sports and youth empowerment initiatives, the bank aims to influence positive social change and raise the standard of excellence for aspiring young Kuwaitis.

To bring home the gold medals, Tareq Al-Qallaf underwent a ten-day intensive training regime which involved strong will and determination to compete at the three day Milwaukee Open Championship. Achieving new heights worldwide as a sportsman since his first win in 1982, Al-Qallaf serves as the perfect example of hard work and exceptional performance for both the sports community and the special needs segment. Sports serve as a dynamic platform to develop better health, self-esteem, and overall lifestyle and play an important role in teaching the youth lifelong values such as confidence, discipline, skills building, and teamwork. Falling in line with its community program, 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change, Burgan Bank sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives.



Tareq Al-Qallaf

Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct

and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.

Asian MMA star slams 'shocking' Las Vegas brawl

SEOUL: Asia's highest-ranked mixed martial artist said fighters must remember they're idols for children as he slammed last week's "shocking" scenes after Conor McGregor's defeat to Khabib Nurmagomedov.

Chan "The Korean Zombie" Sung-jung said the post-fight violence, when Nurmagomedov and his team attacked McGregor and his entourage in images beamed around the world, had set back attempts to clean up MMA's image.

"We should be inspiring kids and not shocking them," the Seoul-based featherweight said ahead of this week's Angel's Fighting MMA event in Seoul, where all profits pay medical expenses for terminally ill children.

"As martial artists we are role models," added Chan, who is ranked 10th in the world by the UFC in his weight division. "Hyping up the fight is understandable but violence outside the cage is a no-go. We are adults and should remember the impact what we do has on kids."

Chan was speaking at his Korean Zombie Gym in Seoul as he prepared to fly out for his next fight, against the UFC's former champion and third-ranked featherweight Frankie "The Answer" Edgar.

The bout will headline the UFC's 25th-anniversary fight card in Denver on November 10, reflecting Chan's stature and the sport's global reach.

If he finds a way past the American veteran, the Korean fighter is expected to get a second shot at the featherweight title—and the chance to become the UFC's first Asian world champion. "Fighters are emerging from all over Asia, and from South Korea," said Chan. "The image of the sport has improved and it is up to us as martial artists to make sure this continues."

Chan's "Zombie" tag comes from his ability to keep moving forward into battle, even when under a barrage, and he is level-headed about the challenge posed by Edgar. "I know he will try to wear me down, try to exhaust me, but I am ready for that," said Chan. "My stamina is very good." Chan seemed destined for the top after joining the UFC in 2011, after starring on the domestic scene in South Korea. He went 3-0 before losing to then-featherweight champion Jose "Scarface" Aldo, dislocating his shoulder throwing a huge right before losing via TKO in the fourth. Following South Korea's compulsory military service and a knee injury, Chan exploded back on to the scene with a first-round knockout of Dennis "The Menace" Bermudez in February 2017.

Now with a career record of 14 wins and four losses, Chan will be faced with his biggest challenge yet against Edgar (23-6-1), the 36-year-old former UFC lightweight champion. But Chan said his time away from the cage—while also brought the birth of three children, aged four to three months—had put life into perspective. At the Angel's Fighting event, Chan was in the corner for a fighter from his gym. He said such charity initiatives showed MMA could have a positive impact. "In the past the image (of MMA) has not been great but we are seeing this change, and everything is looking positive," said Chan. "A while back I used to fight for myself, for fame. But now family overrides that and I am fighting for my family." — AFP



HOUSTON: This handout from Zuffa LLC via Getty Images taken on February 4, 2017 and released on October 16, 2018 shows Chan Sung-jung of South Korea (L) punching Dennis Bermudez of the US in their featherweight bout during the UFC Fight Night event in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Wallabies' Foley signs up to stay in Australia

SYDNEY: The Wallabies' experienced stand-off Bernard Foley has rebuffed foreign offers and opted to stay in Australia beyond next year's Rugby World Cup, sporting authorities announced yesterday. Rugby Australia said the 29-year-old—who successfully returned to the test XV fold this month in a stunning comeback against Argentina—will stay in Australia and at "the NSW Waratahs until the end of 2019".

Foley has 64 test caps but until recently been playing understudy to Kurtley Beale as Australia has lurched through several poor results. But Foley seized his chance to retake the gold 10 jersey in Salta, slotting home all six of his conversions and kicking a penalty to help Australia turn a humiliating 31-7 deficit at half time to a 45-34 victory.

Rugby Australia said Foley had "rebuffed offers from overseas to pursue World Cup glory in Japan next year". "I'm really happy to re-sign and now focus on pushing ahead to focus on what's a really big season next year," Foley said.

"The World Cup is obviously a major carrot and I've got a lot of belief in this group that if we continue to work hard and focus on improving every day, then we can push deep into the competition." Australia's poor form has seen them drop to seventh in the world rankings, one spot below Scotland.

Although largely unheralded, Foley stands behind only Aussie legends Matt Giteau, Matt Burke and Michael Lynagh in points scored for the Wallabies.

The Wallabies will wear an indigenous-themed jersey when they face England at Twickenham next month, the first time they have donned the kit overseas in tribute to the role Aborigines play in rugby.

The shirt designed by indigenous artist Dennis Golding symbolises indigenous and non-indigenous communities coming together as one, and was first worn by the Australians when they beat the All Blacks in Brisbane last October. The clash with England, on November 24, will be the third and final Test for the Wallabies during their northern hemisphere spring tour. Wallabies skipper Michael Hooper said the jersey gave the squad the chance to recognise the importance of indigenous culture in Australia.

"New Zealand and England are two of our closest rivals on the sporting field, no matter what sport you talk about, so I think it's very fitting that we will play our first two matches in this special jersey against these two teams," Hooper added.—AFP

Scotland name uncapped trio in big squad for November tests

EDINBURGH: Scotland have named New Zealand-born Blade Thomson, Australian Sam Johnson and former England youth international Sam Skinner in a 40-man squad for the upcoming Autumn internationals as they cast an eye towards next year's World Cup.

Scarlets back-row Thomson, who played for New Zealand at under-20 level, and Exeter Chiefs lock Skinner are eligible through family connections but are among just three new caps in an expansive squad named by coach Gregor Townsend yesterday.

The third is Glasgow centre Sam Johnson, a former Australian schoolboy international who played Super Rugby with the Queensland Reds before moving to Scotland, and qualifies on residency grounds, having joined the Warriors three years ago.

PREPARATIONS

All three are in line to make their debuts in one of the November tests against Wales, Fiji, South Africa or Argentina. "We now begin the last 12 months of our preparations for the World Cup with four tests in four weeks, a similar challenge to the one we'll face in Japan," Townsend said in a statement from Scottish Rugby.

"We've named a 40-man group for this campaign, which highlights the quality of player that is now available to us and the competition for places. "It also enables us to welcome more players into our training environment and hopefully give a few more players a taste of test rugby."

OPPONENTS

"It's going to be an exciting year for the squad but our primary focus is fixed on performing well against Wales—familiar opponents who have already recorded a win against us this year." Scotland face Wales in Cardiff on Nov. 3 and then play at their Murrayfield home against Fiji on Nov. 10, South Africa one week later, and Argentina on Nov. 24.

The Scots have been drawn alongside hosts Japan in Pool A at next year's World Cup, in a group that also contains Ireland, Russia and Samoa.

Squad:

Backs: Alex Dunbar (Glasgow Warriors), Dougie Fife (Edinburgh), Chris Harris (Newcastle Falcons), Adam Hastings, George Horne, Pete Horne, Sam Johnson, Huw Jones, Lee Jones (all Glasgow Warriors), Blair Kinghorn (Edinburgh), Greig Laidlaw (Clermont Auvergne), Sean Maitland (Saracens), Byron McGuigan (Sale Sharks), Ali Price (Glasgow Warriors), Henry Pyrgos (Edinburgh), Finn Russell (Racing 92), Matt Scott (Edinburgh), Tommy Seymour (Glasgow Warriors).

Forwards: Alex Allan (Glasgow Warriors), Simon Berghan, Magnus Bradbury (both Edinburgh), Fraser Brown (Glasgow Warriors), Allan Dell (Edinburgh), David Denton (Leicester Tigers), Matt Fagerson (Glasgow Warriors), Ross Ford, Grant Gilchrist (both Edinburgh), Jonny Gray, Rob Harley (both Glasgow Warriors), Murray McCallum, Stuart McNally, WP Nel (all Edinburgh), Gordon Reid (London Irish), Jamie Ritchie (Edinburgh), Sam Skinner (Exeter Chiefs), Blade Thomson (Scarlets), Ben Toolis (Edinburgh), George Turner (Glasgow Warriors), Hamish Watson (Edinburgh), Ryan Wilson (Glasgow Warriors). —Reuters