

# Sports

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PATRIOTS SHOOT DOWN JETS, PANTHERS WIN

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AUSTIN: Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain, celebrates after winning the world championship at the Formula One US Grand Prix auto race at the Circuit of the Americas. Left is Mercedes driver Nico Rosberg of Germany and right Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel, of Germany. — AP

## HAMILTON TAKES THIRD F1 TITLE

**AUSTIN:** Lewis Hamilton joined the elite group of triple Formula One world champions on Sunday after winning a thrilling US Grand Prix that kept the crowd on tenterhooks right to the very end.

"That's the greatest moment of my life," he gasped over the team radio, choking back the tears, after crossing the line 2.8 seconds ahead of German team mate Nico Rosberg who had led before a late mistake. The first British driver to win back-to-back titles, Hamilton realised a lifelong ambition to equal the tally of his boyhood idol Ayrton Senna, the Brazilian triple champion who died in 1994.

Ferrari's four-times champion Sebastian Vettel finished third, after starting 13th and fighting back to chase Rosberg nose-to-tail over the final lap with the crowd on the edge of their seats on a cold and blustery afternoon after morning rain.

Had Vettel passed Rosberg, the celebrations for the 'double double' with Mercedes retaining their constructors' title two weeks ago in Russia would have remained on hold.

"I'm just overwhelmed," said Hamilton, who had needed to beat Vettel by nine points and Rosberg by two to take the crown with three races to spare.

"There were so many times when I thought I had lost the race." Interviewed on the podium by pop's very own 'rocket man', British pop singer Elton John, Hamilton sprayed the champagne with abandon while Rosberg looked shellshocked and barely reacted.

Before the podium ceremony, Hamilton tossed his team mate a cap to wear. The German threw it back in disgust. No words were necessary.

"I don't know what happened," he said later when asked about his slip. "It was my race to win, but with some strange mistake that has never happened to me that was really disappointing."

"It's unbelievable. That was really, really tough at the time, to lose the win." The victory, on a rollercoaster afternoon of enthralling racing, was Hamilton's third in four grands prix held in Austin and made the 30-year-old the first driver to win 10 or more races in successive seasons. He was also only the second Briton since Jackie Stewart in

1973 to win three titles. But for much of the race, on a drying track after torrential rain forced qualifying to be postponed from Saturday to Sunday morning, it had looked as if Hamilton would be kept waiting to realise his dream.

He had seized the lead at the start from second place on the grid, banging wheels with Rosberg at the first corner and forcing his team mate wide and down to fourth place.

Hamilton could not pull away from the chasing Red Bulls however, with Australian Daniel Ricciardo taking the lead with 15 laps gone and before drivers pitted from intermediate to slick tyres.

The Briton then dropped down to fourth place, with Rosberg back in the lead after 22 laps following the pit-stops, but the first of two safety car deployments brought everything back into play.

Rosberg was heading for victory when, seven laps from the end, he made an unforced error, ran wide at turn 12, and Hamilton on fresher tyres after a later pitstop seized his opportunity.

Ricciardo had dropped back by then after colliding with the Force India of Nico Hulkenberg on a rare afternoon of mayhem with just 12 finishers.

One of them was American Alexander Rossi, the first home driver to compete in a U.S. Grand Prix since 2007, in last place for Manor Marussia.

There was also early carnage when the two Saubers collided in the Swiss team's 400th race while the Williams of Felipe Massa spun after a coming together with Fernando Alonso's McLaren.

Russian Daniil Kvyat, who had also challenged for the lead in the early stages, brought out the crucial second safety car when he lost control and slewed across the track and into the barriers on the 43rd lap. That gave Hamilton the chance to close right up and pounce when Rosberg erred. Dutch teenage rookie Max Verstappen was fourth for Toro Rosso after a lively battle against both Ferrari drivers and Mexican Sergio Perez, whose country returns to the calendar for the first time in 23 years next weekend, was fifth for Force India. Britain's Jenson Button produced some much-needed points for McLaren in sixth. — Reuters

### ROSBERG AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN HIS ERROR

**AUSTIN:** A downcast Nico Rosberg said he was at a loss to explain the error that gifted Mercedes team mate Lewis Hamilton both victory and a third Formula One world championship in a rollercoaster US Grand Prix on Sunday.

The German was leading when he ran wide with seven laps to go, a mistake that allowed Hamilton to blast past and take the victory.

"I just got wheelspin. It's never happened to me, ever. Not even in testing or racing, never, ever something like that. I can't explain it. It's unbelievable. I don't know," he told reporters.

"We just need to look into it afterwards but obviously that was really, really tough at the time, to lose the lead like that and to lose the win, because I was feeling really good at that point and it just went wrong." The German made his feelings very apparent

afterwards, throwing a cap back at Hamilton when it was tossed in his direction before they went on the podium.

Unsmiling, and almost rooted to the spot, he refused to join in the champagne celebrations. The pair, who have been friends and rivals since their early teens in go-karting and live in the same Monaco apartment complex, had a frosty relationship last season when the championship battle went down to the wire. This year, Hamilton has been far more dominant-winning 10 races to Rosberg's three so far-and Rosberg was understandably sore.

A first corner clash, with Rosberg on pole but Hamilton getting the inside line into the corner, also inflamed the situation and will have Mercedes bosses back in crisis management mode once the celebrations are done. — Reuters

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