

## Sports

# Vettel ends long wait for victory with Singapore triumph

## Championship leader Lewis Hamilton finishes fourth

**SINGAPORE:** Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel ended his year-long drought without a win at the Singapore Grand Prix yesterday, mastering a hazy circuit to claim a record fifth triumph in the city-state.

The German was chased home by teammate Charles Leclerc, who started on pole but lost the lead to the four-time world champion after making his pit stop, and Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who finished third. "It was a very late call on the pit stop and I just gave it everything on the out lap. I was surprised to come out ahead and it was difficult to manage the tyres but we controlled it to the end," Vettel told reporters.

Championship leader Lewis Hamilton finished fourth but extended his advantage over fellow Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas to 65 points, with six races remaining, after the Finn finished in fifth.

The race got off to a clean start with the top six retaining their grid positions despite Vettel putting immense pressure on second-placed Hamilton in the opening lap.

While a few drivers were shifting position further down the field, the frontrunners were maintaining a one-second gap between each other as Leclerc set a slow pace to make his soft tyres last as long as possible.

Ferrari and Red Bull were the first of the big teams to bring their cars in for pit stops as Vettel and Verstappen were fitted with the more durable hard

tyres on lap 20, with Leclerc following suit on the next lap. Leclerc, however, was dismayed to leave the pits behind Vettel. Hamilton stayed out on track in the lead to set about forging a big enough gap to retain the lead when it was his turn to come in.

But Vettel, Leclerc and Verstappen were lapping much quicker than Hamilton and when the Briton finally stopped seven laps after his rivals, he emerged in a distant fourth place.

Hamilton's only hope of victory was to capitalise on his rivals' degraded tyres late in the race. But three safety car periods — when both George Russell and Sergio Perez stopped on the track, and when Daniil Kvyat collided with Kimi Raikkonen — allowed the front three plenty of time to cool their rubber.

Ferrari will be delighted to have recorded a one-two finish at a circuit they were not expected to muster a podium finish.

But Leclerc was unhappy with the pit strategy that dashed his hopes of a hat-trick after wins in Belgium and Italy.

"I won't do anything stupid, I want us to finish one-two," Leclerc told Ferrari over the radio when he was behind the second safety car. "I just don't think it's fair."

Smog from forest fires in neighbouring Indonesia has shrouded Singapore over the past week, and yesterday air quality dipped to unhealthy levels ahead of the race. —AFP



**SINGAPORE:** Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel (R) holds up the trophy as second-placed Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc (L) looks on, after the Formula One Singapore Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore yesterday. —AFP

## Naomi Osaka ends title drought at Pan Pacific Open

**TOKYO:** Japan's Naomi Osaka ended an eight-month title drought by winning the Pan Pacific Open in her home city yesterday, her first trophy since her second consecutive Grand Slam triumph at the Australian Open in January.

The former world number one overwhelmed Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-2, 6-3 in just over an hour to make it third time lucky in finals at the tournament after finishing runner-up in 2016 and 2018. The US-based star, winner of last year's US Open, was born in Osaka and it was clearly a happy homecoming for the 21-year-old who beamed and smiled her way through a dominant week on court. She became the first Japanese player to win the Pan Pacific title since Kimiko Date in 1995. "I have played finals here. This is my third time. So I am really glad that I was able to win, and for it to be in the city where I was born makes it really special," Osaka said.

"I think my serves have been doing really well the last two matches," she said. "I think that definitely helped me out especially today since she (Pavlyuchenkova) is such a great returner," added the big-hitting world number four who stormed through the tournament without dropping a set. —AFP

## Marquez one race away from MotoGP title after Aragon win

**ALCANIZ:** Marc Marquez moved to within one race of sealing his sixth MotoGP title yesterday after another dominant display saw him cruise to victory in Aragon. The 26-year-old's eighth triumph of the season is his fourth in a row at the Aragon Motorland, situated 160km from his home town of Cervera, and means he now sits 98 points clear in the World Championship standings with five races left.

Italy's Andrea Dovizioso, who crossed the line in second after starting the race 10th on the grid, remains Marquez's closest challenger in the standings — although the Honda rider can now seal the title in Thailand next month.

"I was convinced about my strategy and I felt good. I pushed in the beginning, opened a gap of four to five seconds and didn't push more," Marquez said afterwards. "I'm happy with this victory. It looks easy, but in the end we're working very hard. We crashed on Friday, so we are always pushing. We know that Dovizioso never gives up."

Marquez's victory in Spain also ends

any lingering hopes Danilo Petrucci, Alex Rins, Maverick Vinales and Valentino Rossi still had of lifting the trophy. One of Dovizioso and Petrucci, both of Ducati, needed to win to turn the tide but the team's last victory in Aragon came in 2010, while Marquez has made this 5,077km-circuit something of a home venue in recent years.

He finished the race in 41min.57.221sec, a considerable 4.836sec ahead of Dovizioso and 5.430sec in front of Australian Jack Miller, who snatched third and a spot on the podium. "We're really happy about that, we needed that result, especially when you start 10th," Dovizioso said.

Marquez had been quickest in both practice and qualifying and the dry track only enhanced his credentials as the out-standing favourite coming into the race.

Rins had to apologise afterwards for his early dash inside that forced Franco Morbidelli to crash out at the 12th turn, with Rins also affected and dropping down to 19th as a result. Marquez was more than a second clear after the opening lap but Vinales and Fabio Quartararo were both battling for a spot in the top three, with Miller establishing himself behind the leader in second. Valentino Rossi, Dovizioso, Cal Crutchlow and Andrea Iannone were all chasing Aleix Espargaro in fifth and Vinales made his move on the 16th turn to take third, with Miller now firmly in his sights.

Rins served a long-lap penalty, cost-



**ALCANIZ:** Repsol Honda Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP race of the Moto Grand Prix of Aragon at the Motorland circuit in Alcaniz yesterday. —AFP

ing him a few seconds but no positions, as the pack behind Marquez bunched, all in touch with the podium places. Having seen off Quartararo, Vinales now surged round the outside of Miller while Marquez moved almost five seconds clear, his success all-but secured with six laps to go.

Vinales came under late pressure from Dovizioso and was overtaken by the Italian, who opened up down the back straight. By then, Marquez's victory was complete. In the Moto2 Jorge Navarro

closed the gap on leader Alex Marquez, the younger brother of the 500cc class' top dog, after finishing less than a second behind yesterday's winner Brad Binder.

Spaniard Navarro is 38 points behind countryman Marquez, who finished third in Aragon despite starting the race in pole position. Aron Canet closed to within two points of top spot in the Moto3 after taking advantage of overall leader Lorenzo Dalla Porta finishing 11th by storming to a win and gaining a massive 20 points on the Italian. —AFP

## Cubs' season on ropes as Cards stun Kimbrel

**CHICAGO:** Yadier Molina and Paul DeJong hit back-to-back homers off of hard-throwing closer Craig Kimbrel in the top of the ninth inning, and the visiting St. Louis Cardinals stunned the Chicago Cubs with a 9-8 win on Saturday afternoon. St. Louis (88-67) moved six games ahead of Chicago (82-73) in the National League Central with only seven games to go. The Cubs also fell three games behind the Milwaukee Brewers for the NL's second wild-card spot after the Brewers beat the Pirates later Saturday. Cardinals right-hander John Gant (11-1) got credit for the win after recording the final out of the eighth. He was one of eight relievers to follow starter Dakota Hudson, who gave up three runs in three innings. Molina evened the score at 8 on Kimbrel's first pitch of the game. He clubbed a high fastball over the wall in left-center field for his ninth homer of the season and 155th of his career. On Kimbrel's second pitch, DeJong put the Cardinals on top 9-8. He hammered another fastball an estimated 440 feet to center for his 28th homer, which added to his career high.

### BREWERS 10, PIRATES 1

Keston Hiura's two-run home run propelled host Milwaukee past Pittsburgh, which lost its eighth straight game. Hiura's 18th home run of the season came with two outs in the bottom of the first, on a 3-2 pitch with Yasmani Grandal on base. The Brewers went ahead 2-1 and scored eight more unanswered runs to cruise to their seventh win in eight games and their 14th win in the past 16 games. Along with moving to three up on the Chicago Cubs — their closest competition for the second wild-card spot — the Brewers also ended their night still one game out of the top wild card, held by the Washington Nationals.

### REDS 3, METS 2

Pinch hitter Christian Colon delivered a tiebreaking single off Seth Lugo with two outs in the eighth inning as host Cincinnati put a dent in New York's playoff hopes. The loss put New York (80-74) 4 1/2 games behind the Brewers in that wild-card race and also dropped the Mets' elimination number down to four. Colon batted for reliever Joel Kuhnel with runners at first and second after Justin Wilson (4-2) walked Jose Iglesias and Jose Peraza singled. After Lugo fanned pinch hitter Curt Casali for the second out, Colon grounded a full-count curveball up the middle and Iglesias scored the decisive run.

### NATIONALS 10, MARLINS 4 (10 INNINGS)

Brian Dozier pulled a go-ahead RBI single in the top of the 10th

inning, leading Washington to a win over host Miami after the Nationals blew a four-run lead in the eighth. After Dozier's hit off reliever Jose Urena (4-10), the Nationals got RBIs by Adam Eaton (single), Juan Soto (walk) and Kurt Suzuki (three-run double). That rally made a winner of reliever Wander Suero (6-8). Washington's Stephen Strasburg pitched seven scoreless innings, allowing just three hits and three walks while striking out six. But Nationals reliever Fernando Rodney blew a 4-0 lead in the eighth, retiring just one of the six batters he faced.

### ROYALS 12, TWINS 5

Chesler Cuthbert hit a two-run, pinch-hit home run to break a 5-5 tie and highlight a seven-run ninth inning as Kansas City beat Minnesota in Minneapolis. Cuthbert hit the first pinch-hit homer of his career off reliever Taylor Rogers (2-4), a 364-foot line drive down the left field line, to drive in Ryan O'Hearn. The Royals would go on to roll up eight hits and two walks while sending 13 batters to the plate in the inning. O'Hearn homered, doubled and had three hits and three RBIs. Jorge Soler finished with three hits and an RBI, and Ryan McBroom had two hits and scored twice for Kansas City (57-99), which snapped a four-game losing streak. Randy Rosario (2-0) retired one batter to end the eighth and pick up the win.

### PHILLIES 9, INDIANS 4

Brad Miller hit two solo homers, and Bryce Harper slammed a three-run shot as visiting Philadelphia beat Cleveland to dent the Indians' playoff chances. The loss ended the Indians' five-game winning streak and dropped them a game back of the Tampa Bay Rays for the second wild card from the American League with seven games left. The Indians did remain four back in the AL Central, however, with the division-leading Twins' loss to the Royals. Jason Vargas (7-8) earned his first victory in 10 starts with Philadelphia since he was traded from the New York Mets on July 29. Vargas went 6 1/3 innings, allowing four runs (two earned) and five hits, striking out eight and walking two. Oscar Mercado had a two-run homer to help the Indians to an early 4-1 lead.

### RAYS 5, RED SOX 4 (11 INNINGS)

Nate Lowe hit a two-run home run in the bottom of the 11th inning as host Tampa Bay continued its playoff push with a win over Boston in St. Petersburg, Fla. It was the third straight 11-inning victory for the Rays (92-63), who not only moved that one game ahead of Cleveland in the race for the second AL wild-card spot, but kept pace with Oakland to remain two back of the top wild-card spot. Willy Adames also homered for Tampa Bay. Rays right-hander Diego Castillo (5-8) got the victory for the second straight night despite allowing a go-ahead, solo homer to Boston's Mitch Moreland in the top of the 11th. Right-hander Josh A. Smith (0-3), the 11th Red Sox pitcher, took the loss.

### ATHLETICS 12, RANGERS 3

Matt Chapman had two hits and two RBIs in a seven-run first

inning that helped left-hander Sean Manaea coast to a third straight win, as Oakland routed visiting Texas and won for the 10th time in its last 11 games. Manaea (3-0) remained unbeaten in four starts since making his season debut on Sept. 1 after missing 13 months following elbow surgery. He took a three-hit shutout and 11-0 lead into the sixth inning before serving up solo home runs to Elvis Andrus (his 11th) and Danny Santana (his 26th). Manaea left after 5 2/3 innings, walking one and striking out four. Today's series finale will also be Oakland's final home game in the regular season, as the A's finish the season in Southern California against the Angels, then in Seattle against the Mariners.

### ANGELS 8, ASTROS 4

Luke Bard anchored a strong bullpen performance, and visiting Los Angeles made an early lead stand up in a victory over Houston. Bard (3-2) worked two perfect innings against the heart of the Astros' lineup, as five Angels relievers covered the final 18 outs and denied Houston a chance to clinch its third consecutive AL West title. The Astros will have to wait until the series finale today, after the Angels won for just the second time in their last 13 games at Minute Maid Park.

### YANKEES 7, BLUE JAYS 2

Giancarlo Stanton homered and had an RBI double, and James Paxton allowed just an unearned run in six innings as New York beat Toronto at Yankee Stadium. Stanton doubled to drive in Aaron Judge and then scored on Mike Ford's RBI single in the fourth for the Yankees' first two runs. In the sixth, Stanton hammered an 0-1 changeup from Brock Stewart into the bleachers in deep left field for his second homer of the season. Stanton struck out looking in the first, and manager Aaron Boone was ejected by third-base umpire Joe West arguing the call. Paxton (15-6) won his career-high 10th straight start, allowing three hits with seven strikeouts and no walks. His ERA during the streak is 2.25 ERA, lowering his season ERA to 3.73.

### ROCKIES 4, DODGERS 2

Ryan McMahon and Josh Fuentes hit home runs as last-place Colorado prevented host Los Angeles from reaching 100 wins on the season. It was the Rockies' first victory in eight tries at Los Angeles this season, and they also ended a 12-game losing streak at Dodger Stadium going back to last season. Walker Buehler (13-4), a possible No. 1 starter for Los Angeles when the playoffs open, gave up four runs on five hits with three walks and five strikeouts over six-plus innings. He has given up 17 earned runs over his last three starts against the Rockies, but he also had a career-best 16-strikeout game against them earlier this season.

### BRAVES 8, GIANTS 1

Max Fried may have placed himself back in consideration for a starting spot in the postseason, throwing 5 1/3 scoreless innings as Atlanta hammered visiting San Francisco. Fried (17-6) was in



**CHICAGO:** Kris Bryant #17 of the Chicago Cubs reacts after striking out during the fourth inning of a game against the St. Louis Cardinals at Wrigley Field in Chicago, Illinois. —AFP

danger of being moved to the bullpen for the playoffs after back-to-back shaky outings. But the left-hander bounced back to blank the Giants on five hits. He struck out two and didn't walk a batter. Atlanta (96-60) improved to 50-30 at home and has won three in a row. San Francisco (74-81) has dropped three straight and has lost five of six meetings with the Braves this season.

### DIAMONDBACKS 4, PADRES 2

Abraham Almonte had three hits and scored three runs, and Domingo Leyba and Eduardo Escobar each drove in two runs as visiting Arizona beat San Diego to ruin the debut of interim Padres manager Rod Barajas. Barajas, a former major league catcher, was the Padres' bench coach for Andy Green, who was fired Saturday just eight games shy of completing four seasons as Padres manager. Green had a 274-366 record as the 19th manager in Padres history. Things didn't improve Saturday as the Padres fell to 24-41 since the All-Star break and 1-8 over the last nine games. Eight Diamondbacks pitchers held the Padres to two runs on five hits. Over the last six games, the Padres have seven runs on 27 hits. —Reuters