

## Sports

# Verstappen hits wall in 'terrible' crash; Hamilton on pole position

## Mercedes fined 25,000 euros for second incident

**JEDDAH:** Lewis Hamilton snatched pole position for the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Saturday as championship leader Max Verstappen smashed into a wall and could only manage third place. Verstappen's hopes were extinguished when his Red Bull speared into the barriers at the exit of the last bend on his final flying lap on the tight, unforgiving Jeddah street circuit just as he appeared poised to unseat his rival. "It was terrible," said a shaken but unhurt Verstappen.

Hamilton's Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas was second and will share the front row. "What a tough track this is," said Hamilton after a lap of 1min 27.511sec and who remains on course for a record eighth world title. "It's incredibly technical and complex. It's amazing what they have built, the speed, it's phenomenal. "We were quick through practice but particularly FP3 and qualifying, we were struggling with the pace and the tyres, so for us to get a one-two, really proud of Valtteri and the team. It's a great result. "Given where we were, I'm

grateful for what we have got today."

For Hamilton, who has cut Verstappen's championship lead with successive wins in Brazil and Qatar, it was a fifth pole of the season and 103rd of his career. Verstappen, who has an eight-point lead over Hamilton with just two races left, can claim his first world title yesterday if he wins the race and Hamilton finishes outside the top six.

If not, the 2021 title battle will go down to the wire in Abu Dhabi next weekend. "I don't really understand what happened (on the final flying lap). I locked up a bit," Verstappen. "It was terrible but in general, it was a good qualifying. It was a bit hard to switch on the tyres because it's a street circuit but I knew the pace was there."

'Pretty brutal'

He added: "P3 is disappointing but today did show that the car is quick around here so we'll see what happens tomorrow." Red Bull team chief Christian Horner was hoping Verstappen's car did not suffer gearbox damage. If it needs to be replaced the Dutchman will face a grid penalty for the race. "That was looking like the lap of the year. It's a great shame," Horner told Sky Sports. "He just grabbed the front end at the last corner and tried to keep the momentum - as he could see on his dash he was 0.4 up going into the corner - and unfortunately he has run out of road."

"Pretty brutal but we'll hope the gearbox isn't damaged and see what we can do tomorrow. Max

will be frustrated. He knows what a good lap it was." Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull made up the top five for the next race, the first to be held in the kingdom. Pierre Gasly (AlphaTauri), Lando Norris (McLaren), Yuki Tsunoda (AlphaTauri), Esteban Ocon (Alpine) and Antonio Giovinazzi (Alfa Romeo) complete the top 10. Securing pole capped a dramatic day for seven-time champion Hamilton.

He escaped a sanction for yellow flag incidents in Saturday practice after being summoned over an alleged failure to slow under double waved yellow flags, and for blocking the Haas of Nikita Mazepin. However, the Mercedes star was cleared of any wrongdoing after the stewards admitted that a double-waved yellow light panel had been activated accidentally. Mercedes were fined 25,000 euros for the second incident. Verstappen was hit with a five-place grid penalty for failing to respect double-waved yellow flags during qualifying in Qatar last month. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Kilde wins WCup downhill

**LOS ANGELES:** Aleksander Aamodt Kilde notched his second World Cup win in two days on Saturday, sweeping to a downhill victory at Beaver Creek a day after cementing his return from injury with a super-G triumph. Kilde clocked 1min 39.63sec on the Birds of Prey course in Colorado, with Austrian Matthias Mayer settling for the second step of the podium, 66-hundredths of a second back. Switzerland's Beat Feuz, the four-time defending champion in the discipline, was third, 1.01sec behind the winner. "It's unbelievable," Kilde said. "I love to be here, love to be back competing. Great weather, great conditions, great crowd and good skiing - that's a good package." Kilde, who won the overall title in the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, saw his 2021 campaign cut short by a ruptured right knee ligament last January. —AFP

#### Axelsen powers into final

**JAKARTA:** Badminton world number one Viktor Axelsen inched closer to a second title at the three back-to-back events in Indonesia on Saturday by reaching the final of the World Tour Finals. The Olympic gold medalist, who also won the Indonesia Open last week, dominated both sets against India's Lakshya Sen, winning their semi-final 21-13, 21-11 in 39 minutes. The Dane will face unseeded Thai player Kunlavut Vitidsarn, who beat Malaysia's rising star Lee Zii Jia 21-18, 21-18. South Korea's An Se-young reached the women's singles final after winning 25-23, 21-17 against Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong. An is hoping to add to her Indonesia Masters and Indonesia Open triumphs. The 22-year-old will played Pusarla Venkata Sindhu of India in yesterday's final. —AFP

#### Kongwatmai secures first win

**PHUKET:** Thailand's Phachara Kongwatmai took home his first Asian Tour victory yesterday, claiming the \$1 million Laguna Phuket Championship after fending off two fellow countrymen and South Korea's Bi-o Kim by a single shot. Phachara's 10-under par total of 270 came after he holed a 12-foot par putt on the 18th, eking out a win with Kim, Panuphol Pittayarat and Denwit Boriboonsub hot on his heels. "I feel very happy and very excited for this year... (I've) been waiting for about six years," he said. "Right now it is my time and I feel great." The young Thai star sprang on to the golf scene in 2013, triumphing at the Singha Hua Hin Open as a 14-year-old amateur. In 2015, he won twice during the Asian Development Tour, but the pandemic halted his seemingly unstoppable ascent. —AFP

#### Leipzig coach Marsch quits

**BERLIN:** RB Leipzig said yesterday that coach Jesse Marsch is leaving his job with immediate effect, amid a disappointing season for the ambitious Bundesliga side. The 48-year-old American had come under increasing pressure due to a series of poor results, with Friday's 2-1 loss to Union Berlin—their third successive Bundesliga defeat—proving the final straw. Until Sunday Leipzig had never sacked a coach since they joined the top flight in 2016. "RB Leipzig and head coach Jesse Marsch have mutually agreed to part ways," the club said in a statement on their website. "The decision is the result of an in-depth analysis and intensive discussions after the Bundesliga match against Union Berlin." Jesse Marsch will be released with immediate effect and assistant coach Achim Beierlorzer will take charge of the team ahead of the upcoming home (Champions League) game against Manchester City. —AFP

#### Garbisi hits 100-point

**PARIS:** Italy fly-half Paolo Garbisi reached 100 points for the season as Montpellier beat Perpignan 30-6 in the French Top 14 on Saturday and Bordeaux-Begles moved above Toulouse to the summit of the table with a 17-7 win. Garbisi, 21, who started all of the Azzurri's November internationals kicked 13 of his side's final tally to keep them third in the table. "We were patient and it opened up. The Catalans gave a lot in the first half," Montpellier coach Philippe Saint-Andre told reporters. "We're still in the race. It's our fifth straight win, you can't forget that." Garbisi, the former Treviso stand-off, started in the No. 10 shirt a week after scoring the 79th-minute winning penalty in last Saturday's 25-24 win over Castres with South Africa playmaker Handre Pollard on the bench. —AFP

## Team Pro Rider takes first at Red Bull Bar Bahr 2021

**KUWAIT:** Red Bull Bar Bahr recently concluded, with 15 powerful teams participating in the well-received land and sea race. The 2021 edition saw team Pro Rider take the championship in yet another tough and competitive race, which took place just this past Friday, on December 3 at Al Khiran, the beach resort complex in Kuwait.

The tournament went down to the wire in what was once more a very exciting championship race for the series. The spectacular team duo of athletes Mishary Bushaiba (quad) and Abdul Rahman Al Omar (jet ski) were the underdog team to come out on top, exceeding even a few big name athletes in the tournament, and they did so with determination and style.

Red Bull Bar Bahr is a land and sea relay race where the first rider, on land, traverses a man-made circuit on a quad, and once completed, hands the keys to the second race vehicle to their team member, to complete the jet ski section of the race. The combination relay of two incredibly popular sports makes the tournament unique, as dual-combination tournaments are generally few and far between.

As per usual, there were strict safety measures in place. All team members wore a full face helmet at



all times, and had a valid driving license for the vehicle they piloted over the course of the event. Other on-the-spot measures were taken by the judges, as they watched the tournament unfold. The winning teams received valuable prizes, and the



proud sponsors this year were the Basel Al Salem Al Sabah Motor Racing Club, Voss Water, Room Service, and Kuwait Times. To find out more about Red Bull Bar Bahr, follow @RedBullKuwait on Instagram and Twitter, and @RedBull on Facebook.

## Kuwait to host 2 tennis events



By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah said Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis complex will host two events - the first is the Arab Masters Tennis Tournament (from December 6 to December 12) with the best players from 16 Arab countries, and the second event is the opening ceremony of the Gulf Games to be hosted next month.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber, who spoke during a press conference on Saturday said the players will start arriving today, and the draw will be made tomorrow. The tournament is a five-day event. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber said hosting the Arab Tennis players in the masters event was included in an integrated plan.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah said the seventh ranked player in the world Tunisian Ons Jabeur will be the guest of honor, adding that he is proud to have the first Arab player ranked in the top 10 players in the world to be present in Kuwait. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber welcomed the delegations and urged fans to attend matches. Al-Jaber thanked the Public Authority for Sport for their support as well as the Health and Interior ministries for their cooperation.

## Kuwait shooting tournament ends

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The Late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah annual shooting tournament concluded on Saturday with a closing ceremony that was attended by Sheikh Bader Sabah Al-Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Sheikh Abdallah Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Sheikhha Mariam Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. President of the Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engr Duaij Al-Otaibi, Secretary General of both federations Obaid Al-Osaimi were also in attendance.

The results of the three-day event were as follow: Mansour Al-Rashidi won the skeet event followed by Mohammad

Nayef Al-Daihani (second) and Abdelaziz Al-Saad (third). The trap event was won by Talal Al-Rashidi; Khalid Al-Mudhaf (second) and Nasser Al-Miqlid (third). In the Women's Skeet Event followed by Iman Al-Shamma (second) and Afrah Adel (third). The Juniors Skeet was won by Saud Al-Hamly; Salem Al-Rashidi (second) and Abdallah Al-Rifaa (third). Finally, the Juniors Trap Event was won by Yousuf Al-Rashidi; Salah Al-Rashidi (second) and Talal Al-Enezi (third).

Secretary General of KSF Obaid Al-



Osaimi said the Kuwait Shooting Sport Club is honored to organize this championship each year since the establishment of the club in respect of the late Sheikh -

for his role in support of the shooting sport. He said the club is keen to have juniors in the tournament to prepare a strong generation.