

## Sports

# Hamilton hails brilliant Brazil win as probably 'the best'

## Verstappen's lead cut to 14 points ahead of Qatar Grand Prix

SAO PAULO: If Lewis Hamilton clinches a record eighth world title it will be in no small part due to Sunday's against-all-odds Brazil win he ranked as "the best weekend I have experienced in probably my whole career".

On Friday night that looked a fanciful idea, when he was hit with disqualification from pole in Saturday's sprint after the stewards had detected a minor infringement on his car. Setting off 20th he produced a vintage overtaking masterclass to take fifth, which dropped to 10th in the grand prix grid after a penalty for an engine change.

With championship leader Max Verstappen on the front row alongside Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas on pole, a win looked improbable. "Coming here 19 points behind, only one point ahead in the teams championship, we really needed a solid, solid result, but then obviously we had all these penalties," he said.

"Mentally you can just think it's over, it's impossible, but then nothing is if you put your mind to it."

"That's really why we just cultivated a positive mental attitude and went in fighting, guns blazing," he added after climbing the podium draped in a Brazilian flag, the Interlagos fans chanting his name. Enjoying faster speed on the straights courtesy of his new engine, the 36-year-old picked off the cars in front of him one by one - only Bottas under orders to swap places proved light work for all the

racecraft knowledge the seven-time world champion has accumulated between his ears.

Verstappen inevitably proved an altogether tougher assignment. He got ahead of his arch-rival at turn four on lap 48, but Verstappen forced him wide to hold his position. The stewards investigated and determined Verstappen had acted within the rules.

Another failed attempt followed before he succeeded on his third, at the start of lap 59. While Hamilton played the diplomatic card when asked about Verstappen's tactics Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff was livid by that and all the obstacles thrown at his team in Brazil.

"I think we've just had many, many punches in the face this weekend with decisions that could have swung either side against us or for us," he fumed. "It's just something that I'm just angry about and I will defend my team, my drivers to what comes. I've

been always very diplomatic in how I discuss things, but diplomacy has ended today."

He described the decision to disqualify over a broken part on a rear wing "we couldn't look at, couldn't analyze" as "very harsh". Especially he said when Red Bull repaired a wing three times in parc ferme "without consequence".

And he said Verstappen escaping a five-second penalty when it was only Hamilton's quick avoiding action that prevented yet another collision

“Nothing is impossible if you put your mind to it”

## Axelsen, Momota lead badminton's return to Asia for season finale

JAKARTA: Top-class tour badminton returns to Asia for the first time in 10 months as men's world number one Kento Momota heads a strong line-up for three events in Indonesia culminating in the season-ending World Tour Finals.

Olympic gold medalist Viktor Axelsen of Denmark is seeded to meet Japan's Momota in the final of this week's Indonesia Masters, which also features Tokyo bronze winner and home favorite Anthony Ginting. But Olympic silver medalist Chen Long will be missing, along with all players from China, for the first of three back-to-back events on the resort island of Bali beginning today.

Ginting said he was grateful to be able to play at home again, even though there will be no spectators allowed inside the strict bubble to which the players will be confined for three weeks to protect them from coronavirus.

"Not only team Indonesia, but all the players have waited to play in front of huge crowds, like we had during previous tournaments in Jakarta," said Ginting. "But we're still trying to be grateful that the tournaments could be resumed." Women's world number one and Olympic silver medalist Tai Tzu-ying of Taiwan is skipping the Indonesia events, while China are not sending any players, meaning Olympic champion Chen Yufei will also be absent.

Top seed in the women's will be Akane Yamaguchi, the world number three from Japan, who will face a field featuring Olympic bronze medalist PV Sindhu of India and second seed Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand.

Asian badminton fans have been starved of action for almost two years because of the coronavirus pandemic. The last BWF World Tour events to take place on the continent were held in Thailand in January without spectators, as were the Tokyo Olympics.

Players have been warming up and acclimatizing since last week, but are confined to their Bali hotel and the arena. "They're not allowed to go out once they've arrived at the hotel. We're providing for their needs here," Indonesia Badminton Association spokesman Broto Happy told AFP.

The players are staying in a luxury resort with plenty to occupy them, including a private beach. Badminton World Tour events in Indonesia are usually played in the capital, Jakarta, but organizers opted for Bali, which has been badly affected by the loss of visitors during the pandemic.

"By holding the tournaments in Bali, we hope to at least revive its economy, which heavily relies on tourism," Happy said. The spectator ban has come as a disappointment for many in a country where badminton is hugely popular.

"I'm sad that I can't watch the games in person, but I understand doing it without spectators is the best setting," said fan Renata Indra Adiningtyas, 19, who has resigned herself to watching the tournaments on television. The Indonesia Masters ends on Sunday. The Indonesia Open takes place from November 23-28 and the season-ending BWF Tour finals run December 1-5. —AFP

## 'I could have won Tokyo Olympics 100m', says Bolt

DUBAI: Sprint legend Usain Bolt said he could have emerged from retirement to win a fourth straight Olympic 100m title in Tokyo this year, insisting the winning time was within his reach. Bolt, 35, told AFP that it was frustrating to watch the delayed 2020 Games from his home in Jamaica as his male countrymen flopped and Italy's Lamont Jacobs claimed a shock victory. "I really missed it. I was like, I wish I was there," he said in an interview at the Dubai offices of his sponsor PepsiCo on Sunday. "Because for me, I live for those moments. So it was hard to watch."

Bolt dominated sprinting for a generation, winning eight Olympic gold medals and only losing a ninth when his 2008 4x100m relay team-mate Nesta Carter failed a retrospective drugs test. The first Olympic 100m final since the great showman's departure was a subdued affair, with Jacobs clocking 9.80sec at a Covid-emptied Tokyo National Stadium.

"My coach said something to me at the end of my career. He said, 'People are not getting faster. I was getting slower.' I never looked at it that way," said Bolt. "And it's the facts because a lot of guys don't really get faster. Because I have pushed the barrier so far and then I started going backwards time-wise, so for me 9.80 was possible to get done."

But Bolt, who has dabbled in football and music since retiring, said it was "all about motivation" when he was considering a potential comeback in Tokyo. "For the Olympics, it was gonna be different," said the father of three. "I always show up ready because I think this is the highest level, but I've already done everything in the sport so it was all about motivation."

### 'Lightning Bolt' loses sparkle

With a rueful shake of the head, Bolt said it was "not looking good" for Jamaica's men's sprinters after

## Aussies send Ashes warning with T20 triumph

SYDNEY: Australia hailed the nation's maiden Twenty20 triumph as "the ultimate World Cup heist" yesterday, reveling in the team regaining their "mojo" heading into a blockbuster Ashes series against old enemy England.

Mitchell Marsh's unbeaten 77 steered Justin Langer's side to an emphatic eight-wicket defeat of New Zealand in Dubai on Sunday to clinch a title that had long eluded them. Chasing 173 for victory, Australia achieved their target with seven balls to spare on the back of a 92-run second-wicket stand between Marsh and David Warner, who made 53.

It was a sterling performance from a team that went into the tournament beset by poor form, having lost their most recent Twenty20 series 4-1 in Bangladesh in August, minimal game time and dressing-room discontent, with few pundits giving them much hope. "Australia has pulled off the ultimate World Cup heist — written off as no chance, Justin Langer's men defied the odds to seal their maiden title in devastating fashion," said the Sydney Daily Telegraph.

Lifting the trophy for the first time was an ominous signal ahead of the five-Test Ashes series, which starts in Brisbane on December 8, something not lost on Australian media. "England beware! Australian cricket has got its mojo back," screamed The Australian newspaper.

"To say that Australia's stunning T20 World Cup



SAO PAULO: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (center), Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (left) and Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas celebrate on the podium after obtaining the first, second and third positions respectively, in Brazil's Formula One Sao Paulo Grand Prix at the Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace, or Interlagos racetrack, in Sao Paulo, on Sunday. — AFP

between the pair was "laughable". He did temper his anger with sympathy for the stewards who he suggested "have a difficult life anyway and they are only there to lose". His anger will always be tempered by the fact that they fly off to the third

last race in Qatar next Sunday in a far better position that when they arrived in Sao Paulo. Hamilton has reduced Verstappen's lead from 21 points to 14, and Mercedes lead the constructors championship by 11. — AFP



DUBAI: Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt arrives for a charity run at the Expo 2020, in the Gulf emirate of Dubai, on November 13, 2021. —AFP

they failed to reach the Tokyo 100m final and were fifth in the 4x100m relay. And he said none of the current athletes looked capable of beating his 100m and 200m world records of 9.58 and 19.19, rarely threatened since he set them in 2009.

"I don't think I've seen anybody in this generation right now which I personally feel will break the records," he said. "So I think I have a couple more years before somebody will actually break my world records."

Bolt, instantly recognizable worldwide, said he'd "love" to help World Athletics promote the sport and had approached its leader, Sebastian Coe, about a formal role. But he said he had no designs on the presidency. "No, I don't want that job. That's a lot of stress and a lot of work," he said.



DUBAI: Australia's Mitchell Marsh (left) celebrates their win with teammates at the end of the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup final match between Australia and New Zealand at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai on Sunday. — AFP

win will have no bearing on the Ashes is to underestimate the rousing mental euphoria generated by such a win. After a winter of grumbling and years of so-so results, Australia suddenly feels alive, armed and dangerous again," it added.

The core of the T20 team will also spearhead Australia's Ashes campaign, including Warner, Steve Smith, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood. They are due to return to Brisbane imminently on a charter flight with England's Ashes

He added that he would "definitely" have taken the knee to protest against racism on the Tokyo podium, where it was banned under International Olympic Committee rules. "I understand what it's about. Racism, we've been through it so I understand the necessary aspect of it and what is needed," he said. But he revealed that after years of striking the "Lightning Bolt", his signature pose was beginning to grate.

"Sometimes it gets a little bit, I wouldn't say annoying. But I understand that I've done it to myself," he said with a chuckle. "People really enjoy it and it's for the fans, you know. I mean, it's a picture that they will treasure forever. So for me, I'm not always happy doing it, but I do it anyways because it's for them and it makes them happy." —AFP

players who were also involved in the T20 World Cup, where they lost to New Zealand in the semi-finals. According to English media, fast bowler Mark Wood said it was a journey he "wasn't looking forward to", worried that the Australians would "wave the trophy around".

### 'Poking the bear'

While Marsh stole the headlines for his swash-buckling 77, a major factor in Australia's success in the United Arab Emirates was the return of Warner to his destructive best. He went into the tournament after being sidelined by his Indian Premier League team Sunrisers Hyderabad and with some commentators suggesting he was past his best.

But the gutsy opener responded by plundering 289 runs over seven innings to be named player of the tournament as he warmed up to face England in devastating style. "I can't believe people wrote him off a couple of weeks ago saying he was done," skipper Aaron Finch told Australian reporters. "It was like poking the bear."

While Australia celebrated, New Zealand media lamented the Black Caps falling to a third straight defeat in the final of a limited-overs tournament. But the New Zealand Herald's Niall Anderson said there could be no complaints, unlike the 2019 one-day World Cup loss to England, which was decided by a boundary countback after scores finished tied after 20 overs and a super over shootout.

"There is nothing controversial to point to and explain the defeat. No obscure rule, no moment where the game could have turned, no reason for New Zealand to feel aggrieved," he wrote. "Instead, there was a simple fact that all in the Kiwi camp had to acknowledge — Australia were simply better. Much better." — AFP