

Sports

Sainz edges revived Hamilton in second Silverstone practice

Alonso set an early fastest time for Alpine before Sainz

SILVERSTONE, United Kingdom: Carlos Sainz outpaced local hero Lewis Hamilton in Friday's second practice at the British Grand Prix, his Ferrari edging the revived Mercedes by one tenth of a second on a rain and wind-affected day. The Spaniard, recording his first session-topping time since the Australian Grand Prix in April, clocked a best lap in one minute and 28.952 seconds to beat the seven-time world champion, who appeared to have rediscovered his verve, by 0.163 seconds. Another Briton, Lando Norris of McLaren, was third fastest for McLaren, ahead of world champion and series leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull and Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari.

Fernando Alonso was sixth for Alpine ahead of Sergio Perez in the second Red Bull, George Russell in the other Mercedes, Daniel Ricciardo and Aston Martin's Lance Stroll. For Hamilton, who lost a piece of his car's bodywork in the final minutes, it was a solid demonstration of the potential of his Mercedes.

After an embattled week during which he has rebutted offensive com-

ments from various critics, including revelations of a vulgar attack by Nelson Piquet, this was a classic Hamilton riposte. On a blustery and cool day punctuated by more off-track news and reaction at the former airfield, the Red Bulls led the field out to make up for lost time after the wet opening session had allowed little meaningful running.

Protest

Alonso set an early fastest time for Alpine before Sainz and then Leclerc went top. Both Ferraris were running with more new parts for their power units. Verstappen struggled with the conditions and a minor mechanical problem. "It's like something is touching-I don't know what-and it's very windy out here," he said. Hamilton reported the familiar bouncing problem that has blighted his and Mercedes' season but after work on the rear of his car, jumped to second fastest, ahead of Norris and Verstappen, with a lap that generated appreciation from the big Friday crowd.

For Hamilton, the support of his fan base had been important during a try-

ing week of offensive criticism from those critics-including Piquet, Bernie Ecclestone and Jackie Stewart-who he described as "older voices" undeserving of the platform supplied by the media. Advised to retire by Stewart and insulted with a racial slur by Piquet, Hamilton had also acceded to the sport's new enforcement of a 'bling ban' by removing a nose stud.

It emerged on Friday that Piquet had not only used a racist slur, but had also used homophobic language in a further offensive comment during his appearance in a Brazilian podcast last November. Piquet was banned from the Formula One paddock and had his membership of the British Racing Drivers Club suspended on Thursday, when his comments were first reported. New footage of further comments by Piquet was revealed on social media on Friday. This included insulting remarks aimed at Keke and Nico Rosberg and both racist and homophobic slurs against Hamilton.

To add to the public furor, as F1 unified in support of Hamilton, the local Northamptonshire police revealed it had



SILVERSTONE, Northamptonshire: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton drives during third practice ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit in Silverstone, central England. —AFP

uncovered a plot by protesters seeking to disrupt the race with a track invasion. Chief Inspector Tom Thompson said: "We have credible intelligence that a group are planning to disrupt the event on race day." He added an appeal to the

group, warning them their plans were reckless and dangerous and could jeopardize lives. "Protesting is everyone's human right in this country and we are happy to speak to you to help facilitate a peaceful protest." —AFP

Six-try New Zealand romp past Ireland 42-19 in first Test

AUCKLAND: New Zealand scored six tries in a compelling attacking display to beat Ireland 42-19 in the first Test of the three-match series at Eden Park on Saturday. The All Blacks were in command after opening up a 28-5 half-time lead and Ireland's problems were compounded by captain Johnny Sexton being forced off with a head knock that will put him in doubt for the second Test in a week's time.

The home side's finishing was the difference in a relatively even contest, their individual skill often the basis of breaks while Ireland had to work hard to create their three tries. New Zealand loose forward Ardie Savea scored two tries, including a dynamic second-half score, while fullback Jordie Barrett converted all six tries and crossed the line himself in a 17-point haul.

The result maintains Ireland's record of having never beaten the All Blacks in New Zealand, a run they were hoping to overturn after winning three of the previous five Tests between the nations. It also extends New Zealand's remarkable unbeaten streak at Eden Park, where they have won 45 of 47 Tests since 1994 with two draws.

Ireland's hopes nosedived when they lost Sexton to concussion in the first half. The veteran fly-half failed a head injury assessment and is likely to miss the second Test in Dunedin next Saturday under World Rugby protocols, adding to a mounting injury list.

New Zealand also had to overcome disruption in the build-up, losing the services of seven members of coaching and playing staff to COVID-19. But it did not show in a strong response to heavy defeats to Ireland and France on their northern hemisphere tour at the end of 2021.

Storming Savea

Ireland applied enormous pressure in the opening exchanges, completing 18 phases of play before seasoned wing Keith Earls darted across for his 35th Test try. New Zealand were scoreless through the first 20 minutes but the floodgates opened soon afterwards, firstly when Jordie Barrett barrelled across, set up by a charge from debut wing Leicester Fainga'anuku.

Momentum swung on the half-hour mark when All Blacks wing Sevu Reece pounced on a loose Garry Ringrose pass and raced 80 metres to score. In the same passage of play Ireland captain and playmaker Sexton was struck by an accidental forearm from New Zealand counterpart Sam Cane and was unable to return to the field.

New Zealand created two tries in two minutes before the break through short kicks. Quinn Tupaea capitalised on a slick Beauden Barrett grubber before a chip and chase from Aaron Smith resulted in Savea's first try. —AFP

Galthie hails young France side after beating feisty Japan

TOYOTA VITY: France head coach Fabien Galthie praised his young team for finding "the key to open all the doors" after stretching away in the second half to beat a spirited Japan 42-23 on Saturday in the first Test. The Six Nations champions fielded an inexperienced line-up at a steamy Toyota Stadium and struggled to impose themselves in the first half with temperatures soaring to 33 degrees Celsius.

The sides were level 13-13 at half-time and Galthie said his players managed to "rethink and get on the front foot" after the break. A Matthis Lebel try shortly after the interval helped France click into gear before further tries from Damian Penaud, Yoram Moefana and Pierre Bourgarit gave next year's World Cup hosts a comfortable win in the end.

"We adjusted what we had wanted to do but had failed to implement in the first half for a lot of reasons, notably because of the intensity of the Japanese players," the coach said. "We had made errors which we do not normally make. We managed to find the solutions, the key to open all the doors."

Galthie handed first caps to lock Thomas Jolmes and No.8 Yoan Tanga, with Thomas Lavault also coming off the bench to make his debut. Several of the France squad that won the Grand Slam earlier this year were rested for the trip to Japan and Galthie was pleased with how the players coming in took their chance.

"One has to remember that this is a young side with very little experience as a unit — their aver-



TOYOTA CITY, Japan: France's Matthieu Jalibert (C) is tackled by Japan's Takuya Yamasawa (L) and Ben Gunter (R) during the rugby union international Test match between Japan and France at Toyota Stadium in Toyota City, Aichi prefecture. —AFP

age age is just 25," he said. "It is a young team but they were able to assess at half-time what had gone on in the first half and to learn those lessons and react accordingly in the second half." Japan also fielded an unfamiliar line-up after the 2019 World Cup hosts were hit by a spate of injuries and COVID cases.

'It's frustrating'

Fly-half Seungshin Lee was winning only his second cap at the age of 21 after being drafted into the

starting line-up the day before the game when Takuya Yamasawa tested positive for the virus. Japan scored two tries through Tevita Tatafu and Siosaia Fifita, and captain Atsushi Sakate said they will be looking for "revenge" when they meet France again next week at Tokyo's Olympic stadium.

"It's frustrating — there are lots of things we can improve on," said Sakate. "We made mistakes but we managed to play the kind of rugby that we're aiming for. We need to take what we did well and work to do it better." —AFP

Johnson, Ortiz share LIV Golf lead in Portland

LOS ANGELES: Dustin Johnson and Carlos Ortiz shared the second-round lead in the LIV Golf Series stop in Portland on Friday as players jumping to the breakaway circuit continued to face criticism. Johnson, the former world number one whose two major titles include the 2020 Masters, briefly threatened to make it a runaway before three late bogeys saw him settle for a four-under par 68 and an eight-under total at Pumpkin Ridge. He'll go into the final round of the 54-hole, shotgun start event neck and neck with overnight leader Ortiz, who birdied the final hole to cap a 69.

They are two strokes ahead of South African Branden Grace, who also signed for a 69. "I'm really happy with the way I'm swinging it," said Johnson, who at 17th in the world is the highest-ranked player

to risk the wrath of the US PGA Tour and make the jump to the lucrative new circuit. "Tomorrow I just need to go and do the same thing, just drive in the fairway." Johnson made his LIV debut in the inaugural event near London in June while Mexico's Ortiz is playing for the first time.

Ortiz won his lone US PGA Tour title at the Houston Open in 2020, joined the list of players suspended by the US circuit after teeing off in the upstart Saudi-backed series. The DP World Tour has also sanctioned members lured by the massive paydays on offer that included signing bonus and a \$20 million purse for this week's 48-player field with an additional \$5 million prize money on offer in a team competition.

DP World Tour chief executive Keith Pelley launched a scathing attack Friday on players who threatened the tour with legal action unless their sanctions - fines and suspensions - for competing in LIV Golf were rescinded. Pelley called their demands, made in a letter that was published in The Telegraph, contained inaccuracies and that the players knew "there would be consequences if they



NORTH PLAINS, Oregon: Carlos Ortiz of Mexico hits his tee shot on the fifth hole during round two of the LIV Golf Invitational - Portland at Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains, Oregon. —AFP

chose money over competition."

Hostility from the established tours and concerns over the human rights record of LIV's Saudi backers apparently aren't slowing the upstart circuit. Golf Digest reported Friday that the series has accelerated growth plans for 2023 with 14 events rather than 10 and plans a name

change to the LIV Golf League. The report, citing an unnamed LIV Golf official, said the quick expansion is a product of signing several top US PGA players ahead of this week's event, including Americans Bryson DeChambeau, Patrick Reed, Brooks Koepka and Matthew Wolff. —AFP

Lampaert shocks 'big guys' in rain-drenched Tour de France opener

COPENHAGEN: Belgian Yves Lampaert shocked the favourites to pull on the leader's yellow jersey after the rain-drenched first stage of the Tour de France, an individual time-trial in the Danish capital on Friday. Quick-Step rider Lampaert suffered less thanks to a later start than the pre-race favourites on the slippery 13.2km route, finishing five seconds ahead of compatriot Wout van Aert, with defending champion Tadej Pogacar third best seven seconds off the pace.

Massive crowds lined the streets as riders sped past the Little Mermaid statue, the harbour-front Blox building and the Amalienborg palace, where Crown Prince Frederik joined the celebration. Lampaert was overwhelmed with emotion as the 31-year-old realised he would wear the overall leader's yellow jersey on Saturday's second stage.

"I was hoping for a top ten, but not this," said the 2021 Belgian time-trial champion. "I beat the big guys. Somehow I managed to beat the best riders in the world. I'm just a farmer's son from Belgium, so this is something I would have never dreamed of. My mind is exploding. I think I'll only realize what I have done after the Tour, when I'll return to my family. I'm so happy with this victory and honored to wear the yellow jersey."

Two-time defending champion Pogacar pulled on

the white jersey as the fastest under-25 rider. "It's great to be back on the Tour, the white jersey was my aim today," said the Team UAE leader. "I loved the crowds and my time was good for the GC (General Classification) against my rivals," he said. Dutch rider Mathieu van der Poel had set the early pace when the rain was at its heaviest. His face creased in pain from the relentless effort and stress of the rain-slick road, van Aert then took the lead ahead of his arch-rival, world champion Filippo Ganna, who suffered a puncture along the way.

Tricky conditions

Slovenian Pogacar threw down the gauntlet to his title rivals cruising through the puddles, the 23-year-old all-rounder sprinting out of every corner in an expert ride. British hope Adam Yates was a picture of

grim determination at the start gate but after producing a top drawer chrono, finished 23sec off the winner while his teammate Geraint Thomas was only a couple of seconds slower. After a week of sweltering sun with Danes flocking to their beach hidos, rain began to fall on Copenhagen an hour ahead of the race.

But Danes enjoy an outdoor lifestyle and were almost uniformly equipped with colorful ponchos, producing a party atmosphere. Runner-up on the 2021 Tour, former fish-factory worker Jonas Vingegaard was cheered loudest as the 25-year-old local rider went for broke to finish just 8sec off Pogacar's time. "I'm just happy I didn't fall," said Vingegaard after several riders hit the tarmac in the tricky conditions. His Team Jumbo-Visma co-leader, former Vuelta a Espana winner Primož Roglic of Slovenia, was only a second faster. —AFP