



BAKU: Red Bull's Dutch driver Max Verstappen wins the Formula One Azerbaijan Grand Prix at the Baku City Circuit on June 12, 2022. (Inset) Verstappen celebrates with the trophy. —AFP

Verstappen wins Azerbaijan Grand Prix

BAKU: World champion Max Verstappen led a Red Bull 1-2 in Sunday's Azerbaijan Grand Prix in a potentially key moment of the title race after Charles Leclerc and Ferrari endured another dose of raceday misery. Sergio Perez had jumped pole sitter Leclerc to the first turn before Verstappen took control as first the Ferrari of Carlos Sainz and then Leclerc retired with engine problems.

George Russell took third with teammate Lewis Hamilton fourth for Mercedes who suffered badly from bouncing on the streets of Baku this weekend. Verstappen's fifth win of the season tightened his grip

on the drivers' standings with Perez now moving into second, 21 points behind, while the luckless Leclerc slipped to 34 points adrift. "Was that a good drive or was that a good drive?" a pleased Verstappen asked over the team radio, mindful that he had ended his Baku jinx having never made the podium on any of his previous visits.

He hailed his car's "incredible pace", adding "we were a tiny bit lucky because of the retirement but nevertheless our car was really quick today, so I could have closed that gap, then you have a race on your hands". It was a memorable day for Red Bull who are

now 80 points clear of Ferrari in the constructors' championship ahead of round nine of the season in Montreal next week. As for Ferrari their habit of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory through a combination of questionable strategy or unreliability issues is beginning to look potentially fatal for their title ambitions. Leclerc for the fourth time was unable to convert pole into a win, and he had his head in his hands in frustration. "Better days will come" if the team just sticks together, Sainz suggested.

That's what Mercedes have been saying all season as they keep trying to unlock the full potential of their

car which suffers more than most of the grid on the so-called 'porpoising' effect. Hamilton had said before the race his back may not withstand being jolted around for the full 51 laps and he had difficulty: the Briton needed support to lift himself out of the cockpit after making it across the line.

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff apologized to the seven-time world champion, saying: "This is a bit of a box to drive. And sorry for the back problems." "Well done guys," Hamilton responded. "And well done on the strategy. Thank you on continuing to push." —AFP



TAMPA: The Tampa Bay Lightning pose with the Eastern Conference Prince of Wales Trophy after defeating the New York Rangers to win the Eastern Conference Final of the 2022 Stanley Cup Playoffs at Amalie Arena on June 11, 2022. —AFP

Bolts beat Rangers to book return to Stanley Cup final

MIAMI: The two-time defending NHL champion Tampa Bay Lightning are headed back to the Stanley Cup final for a third straight year after beating the New York Rangers 2-1 to clinch the Eastern Conference final. The Lightning, who trailed 2-0 in the best-of-seven series, won their fourth straight game for a 4-2 series triumph and a chance to take on Western Conference champions Colorado. The Avalanche host game one of the Stanley Cup final in Denver on Wednesday.

Captain Steven Stamkos scored both goals for the Lightning. He opened the scoring with an angled wrist shot that got past Rangers goalie Igor Shesterkin at 10:43 of the second period. Stamkos was in the penalty box when Frank Vatrano knotted the score at 1-1 on a power play at 13:07 of the third. Just 21 seconds later Stamkos scored again. His initial shot was saved by Shesterkin - who made 29 saves - but the rebound bounced off his leg and found the net.

"These are the games you live for as a kid," said Canada's Stamkos. "It was everything I thought it would be and more, to give ourselves a chance to go to the final three years in a row is something that's amazing and to have a part in it tonight was certainly icing on the cake. "It was an unbelievable team effort." Stamkos added after Tampa Bay dominated possession throughout the contest.

Ondrej Palat had two assists and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 20 saves for the Lightning, who are

trying to become the first team to win three straight Stanley Cups since the New York Islanders won four in a row from 1980-83. They're the first team to reach three straight Stanley Cup finals since the Edmonton Oilers in 1983-85. Stamkos acknowledged that the Lightning got off to a slow start in the series after a nine-day layoff following their sweep of the Florida Panthers in the previous round. "We stuck with it," he said. "There's no panic on this team."

Now they face a formidable opponent in the Avalanche, who swept the Edmonton Oilers in the Western Conference final to reach the championship series for the first time since winning the title in 2001. The Avs will try to claim a third Stanley Cup, having also lifted the trophy in 1996. "We know what it takes," Stamkos said. "But now we've got the best team in the league in the Colorado Avalanche. They have it all. "We have a huge challenge, but tonight we'll enjoy the victory." —AFP

Global media giants battle for IPL cricket rights

MUMBAI: Global media giants including Disney and Sony and Asia's richest man reportedly battled Sunday for the broadcast rights for the Indian Premier League cricket tournament, one of the world's most-watched sporting events. The winning bidders were expected to pay up to \$7.7 billion in an online auction held by India's cricket board on Sunday to show and stream the two-month contest for five seasons from 2023 to 2027, according to analysts.

This dwarfs the \$2.55 billion shelled out by Star India, owned by US behemoth Disney, for the previous five-year deal which ended last month with the 15th edition of the tournament involving an expanded 10 franchises playing 74 matches. Attracting some of cricket's top stars from India and abroad with large salaries, the league has helped make Twenty20, a shorter and more exciting format of the sport, hugely popular, spawning copycat events worldwide.

This time the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is selling off four different packages including domestic and international television and online streaming rights as well as for special matches. Besides Disney and Sony, bidders in the auction, which could stretch into Monday, include a consortium including Viacom as well as Reliance, owned by Asia's wealthiest man Mukesh Ambani, reports said.

Fellow tycoon Jeff Bezos's Amazon, which has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on rights for European soccer and American football and had earlier shown interest in the IPL, pulled out of the contest, reports said on Friday. —AFP