

Mexico City, October 30, 2016

## Lewis closes the gap, Checo grits his teeth

Lewis Hamilton's title hopes are still very much alive after he claimed his second straight win, his seventh of the season and the 51<sup>st</sup> of his Formula 1 career in Sunday's 2016 Mexican Grand Prix at the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez.

His Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg came home eight seconds behind and now leads by just 19 points with two races remaining, but a Mexican Grand Prix which began with 'lucha libre' in the paddock ended with a no-holds-barred fight for the final podium place.

Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel closed in relentlessly on Verstappen, forcing the Dutchman into a mistake under braking, but the young Dutchman went across the grass and retained third spot. Meanwhile the second Red Bull of Daniel Ricciardo attacked Vettel and the four-time world champion had to switch from attack to defence.

As Vettel lost his cool in the cockpit, yelling abuse at Verstappen and race officials, Verstappen headed for the podium to join the two Mercedes drivers – until the news came that he had been given a five-second penalty and therefore dropped to fifth behind both Vettel and Ricciardo.

'What a turn-around! All of a sudden I was told to come up here,' said Vettel after his first podium appearance since Ferrari's home race at Monza. 'The adrenaline was pumping, I was quicker, I put him under pressure, he left the track and didn't move.'

'Viva Mexico!' yelled Hamilton after another dominant performance. 'This is the best crowd we get anywhere. It's my first win here – I don't know where my sombrero is but I do love it here!' He now has 330 points to Rosberg's 349.

Reigning champion Hamilton overcame his biggest obstacle at the very first corner of the 71-lap race when he made a clean start from pole position, while Rosberg was busy fending off a first-corner attack from Verstappen and another one at two-thirds distance when the Red Bull forced its way down the inside at Turn 4.

'He's a bit on the limit,' was Rosberg's comment, 'but it's good racing, I guess. I'm sure it was enjoyable to watch on TV – from in the car it was pretty exciting!'

Behind the front five, Mexico's Sergio Pérez – and a crowd of over 135,00 people – endured a frustrating race-long fight behind Felipe Massa's Williams, Checo finally having to settle for 10<sup>th</sup> place as he complained that the team had left it too late to bring him in for fresh tyres.

His teammate Nico Hülkenberg was on course for a superb sixth place until Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen revived memories of his finest days and forced his way past with five laps left, leaving the German stranded momentarily in the middle of the track.

But it wasn't all bad news for Pérez's team: 'Hulk' recovered from his spin to finish seventh ahead of Williams pair Valtteri Bottas and Massa, so Force India increased their lead by a point in the battle for fourth place overall.

Mexico's other hopes rested on Esteban Gutiérrez, whose Haas started from 15<sup>th</sup>, was investigated but cleared after a first-corner collision with Pascal Wehrlein's Manor, then got the

better of a battle with the other Manor of Esteban Ocon and eventually came home 19<sup>th</sup> of the 21 finishers.

This was the sixth 1-2 result for Mercedes in 2016 and their 17<sup>th</sup> victory – a new record in the Constructors' Championship for a single season. Hamilton goes into the final two races knowing he must win while Rosberg finishes out of the top two in at least one.

Reflecting on the weekend Rosberg again paid tribute to the Mexican crowd and the experience of racing here. 'We as Formula 1 can be really, really thankful,' he said, 'the Mexicans have embraced our sport in an incredible way – a huge, huge crowd coming here, the atmosphere... Amazing out there, so cool to see, so just a big Thank You.'

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