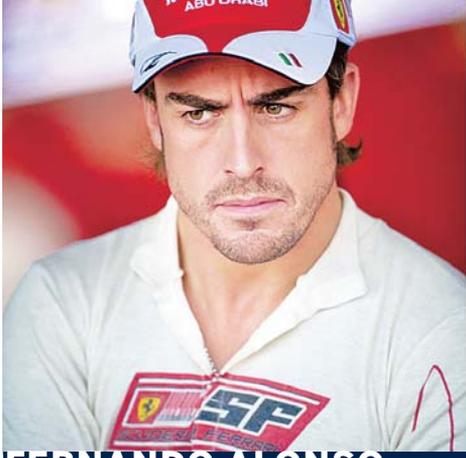


TOP-FOUR SHOWDOWN FOR THE GRAND PRIX FINALE IN ABU DHABI



FERNANDO ALONSO

Standings: 1 (246 points)

The Spanish Ferrari driver, who is widely regarded as the finest of his generation, is a hugely committed and competitive sportsman who has won two world titles already while with Renault. The 29-year-old ace from Oviedo has a rare mix of finesse, technical acumen, raw talent and mental strength, and he has demonstrated this clearly this year by inspiring Ferrari's recovery from a mid-season patch of modest form to become a late-season challenger for his third title in his maiden season with the team. Experienced and also a great strategist, he rarely makes mistakes but has in the past shown that he can be rattled under severe pressure or when he is unable to get his own way. But with an eight-point lead and a fast and reliable car, he is unlikely to be in severe difficulties if he follows his recent strategy of remaining calm and finishing on the podium again.



MARK WEBBER

Standings: 2 (238 points)

The 34-year-old Australian has proved that hard work and endless determination can take you to the top. His and Alonso's careers have mirrored one another's under the management of flamboyant Italian Flavio Briatore as Webber has slogged his way up to emerge as a serious title contender. Tall, arguably the fittest driver of all, fueled by raw aggression and competitiveness, he is also a man of finesse in the cockpit and a realist who tells the truth, as he sees it, out of it. This earned him much admiration but also irked a few of the more political movers in Formula One and left him rather isolated in the Red Bull empire where, as he put it, his title challenge was "inconvenient" in a team built for and around his rival and teammate Sebastian Vettel. His much-improved qualifying form should see him near the front of the grid, but his greater talent is his racing.



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Standings: 3 (231 points)

The young record-breaker, whose rise to prominence in Formula One appeared to have set him on a blazing trail to world glory, has revealed both sides of his character in his racing this year. At 23, it is not a surprise that he can deliver hugely stunning and wholly committed qualifying laps and great surges of speed during races. However, he is also prone to impetuous outbursts and mistakes, some of them serious misjudgements that lead to accidents, and these have cost him large swathes of points. In this race, he will need to prove he has the mind management and composure of a champion, not just the speed.



LEWIS HAMILTON

Standings: 4 (222 points)

The 2008 champion is Formula One's first black driver and was once seen as being as much the energy and heart of McLaren as Vettel is the symbol of Red Bull. At 25, he has proved this year that he has the talent, understanding of his car and mastery of the complex technology to be a major threat but still reveals streaks of impetuosity that have resulted in accidents and retirements and cost points. Unlikely to be quick enough in his McLaren to threaten to win, but he could, if inspired, create havoc as he fights for a podium position. In this race, he could achieve anything but must control his worst enemy — himself.

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Four-man title race marks season finale

Alonso hopes to resist pressure from Webber, Vettel, Hamilton and complete world championship hat-trick

ABU DHABI — Fernando Alonso, Formula One's very own Spanish matador, yearns to put Red Bull to the sword this weekend and become the sport's youngest triple world champion.

Unless, of course, Sebastian Vettel, last year's winner of the inaugural day-night Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, sees red and either tramples the Ferrari driver's challenge or helps teammate Mark Webber do it instead.

Still only 23 but very much the cheeky-faced assassin, Germany's Vettel can himself become the youngest man to take the title in an unprecedented and thrilling four-way end of season championship battle in Abu Dhabi.

Whether the youngster will be in a position to do so, in what could be the closest championship in 60 years of F1, depends on a plethora of permutations.

The three leading contenders could even end up on Sunday afternoon tied on 256 points, with Vettel winning a countback on the most fourth places.

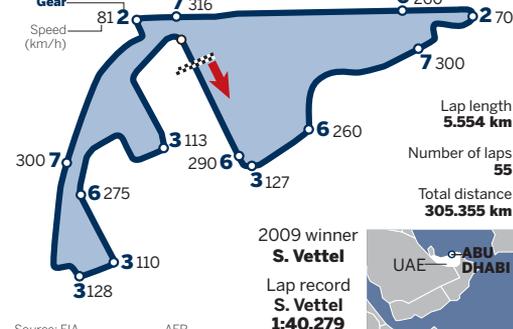
"It is going to be a stressful weekend for all of us, but this is Formula One and anything can happen," said Alonso, who can end the season as he started it in Bahrain — with a win.

Alonso currently leads with 246 points to Webber's 238 and 231 for Vettel, who led a Red Bull one-two in Brazil

F1 ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX

Yas Marina circuit

14 November 2010



2009 winner
S. Vettel
Lap record
S. Vettel
1:40.279

last Sunday to secure the Austrian-owned but British-based team a first constructors' crown.

"I just need to finish second," Alonso said. "It doesn't matter who wins in Abu Dhabi if I finish second. With that, the problem is finished."

Plain-talking Webber has his own plan and is ready to complete his transformation from perceived journeyman to popular champion and end Australia's 30-year wait for a third world beater to join Jack Brabham and Alan Jones.

McLaren's Lewis Hamilton, 24 points off Alonso and needing a miracle to regain his lost 2008 crown, could yet defy the bookmakers' 100-1 odds against him with the upset to end all upsets in front of a sell-out crowd.

"I've still a shot at it, so I will try and win," he told reporters. "They've lots more to lose than I have, so I won't

be looking out for them, letting them past or anything like that."

Which of the four will emerge triumphant after a rollercoaster ride to match anything on offer in the newly opened Ferrari World theme park next to the Yas Marina circuit is anybody's guess.

The fat lady, as Webber put it, is getting into position and about to clear her throat.

Controversy, in a sport whose history is as checkered as the final flag that waves through the winner, is sure to join her on the stage.

Vettel may help Webber if he cannot win the title himself, but the team will not be issuing any orders from the pitwall, unlike Ferrari.

"To interfere with the drivers was never a possibility for us," Red Bull owner Dietrich Mateschitz said this week. "A second place under correct circumstances might be better than a win on grounds of orders and confirmations."

If Alonso wins by fewer than the seven points he gained when Brazilian teammate Felipe Massa was ordered by Ferrari to let him win at Hockenheim in July, then there will be those who say his title is tainted.

"Fernando is an exceptional driver. Some will be disappointed with what happened at Hockenheim and question whether he deserves it. I just hope he wins it by more than seven points," outgoing champion Jenson Button said at the weekend.

If Red Bull's duo opens the door for Alonso to claim the championship, there will also be questions asked about how the most dominant team on the starting grid managed to squander its advantage.

REUTERS

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