

JP RACE DAY · UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX

The title can be won in Texas



SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER 2026 CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS · AUSTIN, TEXAS RACE 15:00 CDT

Kimi Antonelli arrives at the Circuit of The Americas 102 points clear with six Grands Prix left. For the first time this season, a single Sunday could settle the championship.

Singapore was the last sprint of 2026, so from here every point comes on a Sunday: 25 for a win, six races, 150 points in total. Antonelli's lead is 102. Behind him, three drivers are covered by 17 points in the fight for second, and Red Bull have closed to within seven points of McLaren for third in the Constructors' Championship. Austin is a standard weekend, with three practice sessions, qualifying on Saturday and the 56-lap race on Sunday.

01 Antonelli's first match point **ANALYSIS**

With 150 points left, Antonelli is champion on Sunday if he leaves Austin more than 125 points ahead of everyone. Winning while Russell scores no more than a point and Hamilton finishes fifth or lower would do it.

02 Three drivers, 17 points, one runner-up spot **VERIFIED**

Russell (238), Hamilton (229) and Verstappen (221) are separated by 17 points in the fight for second. Russell scored two points across the Singapore weekend; Hamilton 15; Verstappen 33.

03 Red Bull's charge **VERIFIED**

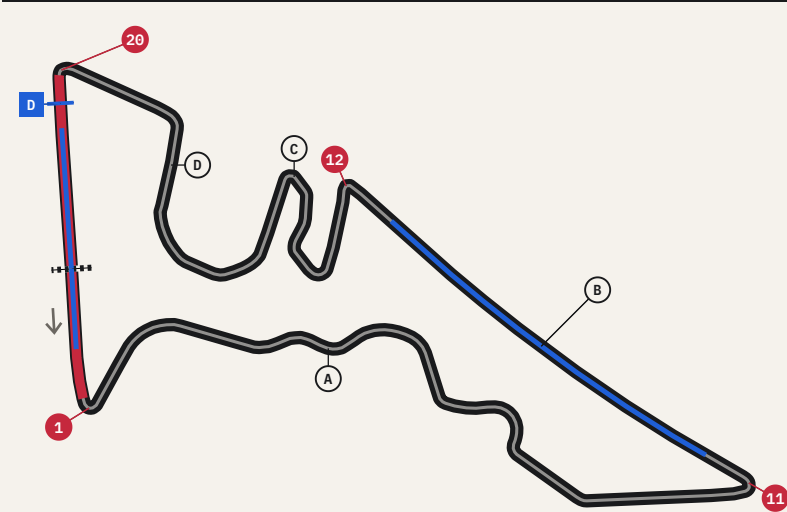
Verstappen has won the last two Grands Prix, at Sepang and Singapore, and took the Singapore Sprint. Red Bull are seven points behind McLaren for third in the Constructors' Championship.

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
 Antonelli	 Russell	 Hamilton	 Verstappen	 Leclerc
340	238	229	221	215

02 · THE CIRCUIT FILE

Circuit of The Americas

Twenty corners, anticlockwise, on a lap that climbs to Turn 1 and finishes with a stadium section and a long multi-apex right-hander. Here is where the race is won and lost.



A Esses B Back straight C Stadium section
D Multi-apex right Straight Mode zone D Overtake detection
Zones at approximate positions, from the FIA's description.
Red: start/finish straight · Arrow: direction of travel · Numbered: corners confirmed from the official outline; full numbering pending a check against the FIA map. Outline: f1-circuits (MIT).

CIRCUIT LENGTH	5.513 km	VERIFIED
RACE LAPS	56	VERIFIED
RACE DISTANCE	308.405 km	VERIFIED
CORNERS	20 (run anticlockwise)	VERIFIED
FIRST GRAND PRIX	2012	VERIFIED
RACE LAP RECORD	1:36.169, Charles Leclerc (2019)	VERIFIED
LONGEST STRAIGHT	about 1.2 km, Turn 11 to Turn 12	MEASURED

Overtaking aids VERIFIED

Two Straight Mode zones: the back straight between Turns 11 and 12, and the start/finish straight from Turn 20 towards Turn 1. Overtake Mode detection is just after Turn 20: a car within one second of the car ahead there gets extra electrical energy to attack.

Turn 1 VERIFIED

The start straight climbs steeply, at around an 11% gradient, into a left-hand hairpin: one of the steepest uphill braking zones in F1. The wide entry allows several lines on the opening lap.

The esses ANALYSIS

A fast sequence of direction changes after Turn 2. Rhythm matters more than any single apex: one late turn-in costs time through every corner that follows.

Turns 11 and 12 VERIFIED

Turn 11 is the slowest corner on the lap and feeds the longest straight, so traction on exit decides the run to Turn 12, the clearest overtaking spot on the track.

Stadium and multi-apex ANALYSIS

Tight corners in the stadium section, then a long multi-apex right-hander that keeps the car loaded for several seconds. A car that slides here wears its tyres faster over a stint.

Most lap time is won or lost on corner exits that lead onto straights: Turn 11 onto the back straight and the final corner onto the start/finish straight. A poor exit costs time all the way to the next braking zone, and gives the car behind its best chance to attack. ANALYSIS

Terms used in this programme

Undercut Pitting before a rival to use new tyres' extra pace to get ahead when they stop.

Overcut Staying out longer than a rival to gain time while they warm up new tyres or sit in traffic.

Pit window The range of laps when a stop makes strategic sense.

Degradation How quickly a tyre loses grip and lap time as it wears.

VSC Virtual Safety Car: everyone must slow to a set pace; positions are frozen and no one may overtake.

Safety Car A physical car leads the field at reduced speed, bunching everyone up behind it.

Straight Mode 2026 active aero: wings flatten to cut drag in designated zones. Replaces DRS.

Overtake Mode Extra electrical energy for a car within one second of the car ahead at the detection point.

Parc fermé From qualifying until the race, cars cannot be changed without a penalty.

VERIFIED official source MEASURED computed from timing data or the outline ESTIMATE sourced estimate
ANALYSIS our editorial view

03 • THE STRATEGY DESK

What a pit stop really costs

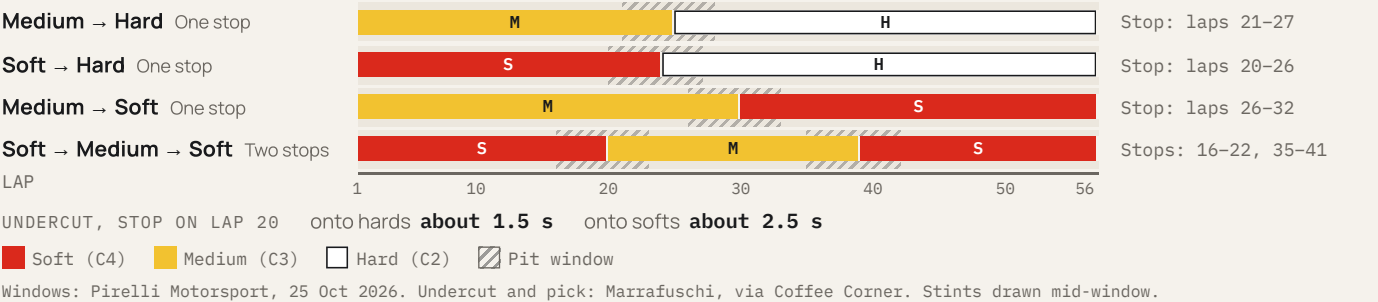
Time in the pit lane is not the same as time lost. What matters is the race time a stop costs compared with staying out, and that changes when the race is neutralised.

CONDITIONS	TIME IN PIT LANE	NET RACE-TIME LOSS	SAVING VS GREEN
Green flag	about 24 s MEASURED	about 20.5 s ESTIMATE	—
Virtual Safety Car	about 24 s MEASURED	about 12–17 s ESTIMATE	about 4–8 s
Safety Car	about 24 s MEASURED	about 8–13 s ESTIMATE	about 7–12 s

- Time in the pit lane is measured: the median from pit entry to pit exit at COTA was 24.0–24.6 s in every race from 2019 to 2025 (f1db timing data). It includes the stationary tyre change of a few seconds, and it does not change under a VSC or Safety Car because the pit-lane speed limit still applies.
- Net race-time loss is what a stop costs compared with staying out. Pirelli put the total time cost of a stop at COTA at about 20.5 s under green flag (2024 preview).
- The VSC and Safety Car figures apply published estimates of the saving (roughly 17–40% under a VSC and 35–60% behind the Safety Car) to that 20.5 s. They are illustrative ranges, not COTA measurements: the real gain depends on where each car is when the period starts and how long it lasts.

TYRE STRATEGY VERIFIED

Pirelli's race-day plans: three one-stops and a two-stop. Its strategy chief's own pick is medium to soft, as drivers aren't happy on the hard.



ONE STOP OR TWO?

2023	Two stops	Top 10 stopped around laps 10–21, then laps 29–40 MEASURED
2024	One stop	Entire top 10; stops between laps 21 and 40 MEASURED
2025	One stop	Entire top 10; stops between laps 22 and 33 MEASURED

Pirelli has nominated C2 (hard), C3 (medium) and C4 (soft), a consecutive set. The hard is one step softer than last year's C1. VERIFIED

UNDERCUT AND OVERCUT

Undercut: pit first and use the new tyres' extra grip to gain the time you lose in the pit lane before your rival stops. It works best when new tyres are much faster than worn ones.

Overcut: stay out longer and gain time on a clear track while your rival is held up on cold new tyres or in traffic. It works best when tyres warm up slowly or the pitting car rejoins in traffic.

IF THE VSC OR SAFETY CAR COMES OUT

A VSC or Safety Car inside the pit window makes a stop cheaper for everyone, so the leaders often pit together and little changes. The real swing comes when it falls just before a team's planned stop, or when a rival has already stopped under green. A Safety Car early in the race can make a one-stop too long and force a second stop.

ANALYSIS

What to Watch

- Who stops first. On a one-stop race, an early stop is either an undercut attempt or a sign that tyre wear is higher than expected.
- Lap 20 onwards. That is when the one-stop window opened in each of the last two races.
- Any VSC between laps 20 and 40: watch who reacts and who stays out.

04 • THE VIEWER'S BRIEFING

Your race-day reference

15:00 CDT

LIGHTS OUT • SUNDAY 25
OCTOBER 2026
CDT (UTC-5), LOCAL TIME
IN AUSTIN

Weekend schedule VERIFIED

Fri 23 Oct	Practice 1	12:30 CDT
Fri 23 Oct	Practice 2	16:00 CDT
Sat 24 Oct	Practice 3	12:30 CDT
Sat 24 Oct	Qualifying	16:00 CDT
Sun 25 Oct	Grand Prix (56 laps)	15:00 CDT

Starting grid

1  Kimi Antonelli	2  Max Verstappen
3  Isack Hadjar	4  Charles Leclerc
5  Lewis Hamilton	6  George Russell
7  Oscar Piastri	8  Lando Norris
9  Liam Lawson	10  Pierre Gasly
11  Nico Hülkenberg	12  Fernando Alonso
13  Oliver Bearman	14  Arvid Lindblad <small>Qualified 9th, +5 places</small>
15  Esteban Ocon	16  Lance Stroll
17  Carlos Sainz	18  Alexander Albon
19  Sergio Pérez	20  Valtteri Bottas
21  Franco Colapinto <small>Qualified 14th, +10 places</small>	22  Gabriel Bortoleto <small>Qualified 13th, to the back</small>

Grid after announced penalties (in red); the FIA confirms it before the race.
Pole: Antonelli, 1:34.035.

Key battles

The title	Antonelli 340, Russell 238: 102 clear, 150 left.
Runner-up	Russell 238, Hamilton 229, Verstappen 221.
Constructors P3	McLaren 339 vs Red Bull 332.
Constructors P5	Racing Bulls 100 vs Alpine 68.

JP'S PREDICTION

COTA is a track that delivers overtaking thrillers and strategy masterpieces. I predict the 2026 US Grand Prix will be one of the most entertaining and balanced races of the season, and it should provide action up and down the field. I predict Max Verstappen will continue his win streak with another win under the Star-Spangled Banner.

– JP

Sources (last verified 25 October 2026)
Circuit facts: Formula1.com: [formula1.com](#)
Pirelli, 2026 compound selection for Austin: [press.pirelli.com](#)
Pirelli, 2024 US GP preview (stop costs about 20.5 s): [press.pirelli.com](#)
f1db, results and pit stops 2019–2025 (CC BY 4.0): [github.com](#)

f1-circuits, track outline (MIT): [github.com](#)
Circuit guides: NASCAR.com, Jalopnik, F1 Fansite: [f1-fansite.com](#)
VSC and SC savings: FormulaDream; Race Sundays: [formuladream.app](#)
Session times: RacingNews365: [racingnews365.com](#)
Standings after Round 17 (checked against f1db): [github.com](#)

2026 aero rules: ESPN; Motor Sport: [motorsportmagazine.com](#)
Qualifying: RaceFans; Pit Debrief; Autosport live: [racefans.net](#)
Grid penalties: Formula1.com: [formula1.com](#)
Aero zones: FIA map via PlanetF1: [planetf1.com](#)
Pirelli Motorsport race-day strategy (official Instagram); Coffee Corner Motorsport: [instagram.com](#)

Standings entering the race VERIFIED

POS	DRIVER	PTS
1	 Kimi Antonelli	340
2	 George Russell	238
3	 Lewis Hamilton	229
4	 Max Verstappen	221
5	 Charles Leclerc	215
6	 Lando Norris	201
7	 Oscar Piastri	138
8	 Isack Hadjar	97
9	 Liam Lawson	75
10	 Pierre Gasly	41

POS	CONSTRUCTOR	PTS
1	 Mercedes	578
2	 Ferrari	444
3	 McLaren	339
4	 Red Bull	332
5	 Racing Bulls	100

Five things to watch

- 1 The run to Turn 1. The climb and the wide hairpin make the first corner a lottery: watch who goes around the outside and who is squeezed on the exit.
- 2 The title maths. To be champion on Sunday, Antonelli must outscore Russell by at least 24 points, Hamilton by 15, Verstappen by 7 and Leclerc by 1. Watch where Russell and Hamilton are running at half distance.
- 3 The Turn 11 exit. Traction onto the longest straight decides who can attack into Turn 12, where most passes happen.
- 4 Laps 20 to 40. The one-stop window in the last two races. The first front-runner to pit tells you what the tyres are doing.
- 5 Verstappen chasing a third straight Grand Prix win, and Red Bull trying to overtake McLaren for third in the Constructors'.