

F1: Verstappen wins Australia GP



● REX

Sports Desk

Max Verstappen claimed victory in the Australian Grand Prix ahead of Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso after a huge PILE-UP at the end of the race. A late red flag saw the race restart from the grid, with a number of cars getting caught up in a catalogue of crashes.

A huge pile-up occurred late on. This led to another flag, the third of the day. With a lap to go the FIA then said the race will resume in the grid order, meaning the race would finish under the safety car. This denied Hamilton and Alonso the chance to try and overtake Verstappen, seeing the Dutchman eventually win his second race of the

season and claim his first win in Australia. However, Verstappen had endured a slow start to the day, being overtaken by both Hamilton and George Russell on the opening lap. The Mercedes duo had overtaken Verstappen on the opening lap after a sluggish start from the two-time champion. However, an early safety car-

turned-red flag after Alex Albon spun into the wall saw a pit call for Russell turn sour as the Brit's race lead went up in smoke. His car followed suit shortly after, bursting into flames and forcing him out of the race. Russell bemoaned his luck on social media, saying, "When it's not your day, it's not your day."

Russell's fine start to the Australian Grand Prix quickly turned to disaster as his car caught fire after his strategy was ruined by a red flag. The Brit, who sat behind Max Verstappen on the grid and a place ahead of Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton, overtook the reigning champion on the first corner to the delight of his supporters.

However, having pitted under a safety car a red flag then gave his rivals a free change of tire, making his earlier decision to stop a pointless one. Russell wasn't able to add to his 18 points for the season thanks to the retirement, with Verstappen leading the way in his search for a third consecutive drivers' championship.

Anthony Joshua smashes Franklin



Anthony Joshua
● DAZN

BBC- Anthony Joshua returned to winning ways with a unanimous points victory over Jermaine Franklin at London's O2 Arena.

The British heavyweight, 33, controlled the contest against the durable American but it was not the explosive early finish many expected.

Two judges scored it 117-111 and one 118-111 to Joshua.

Tempers flared after the final bell as the two fighters squared up to each other, prompting their teams to enter the ring and be separated by security.

It is Joshua's first win in more than two years, having lost consecutive bouts to WBA (Super), IBF and WBO world champion Oleksandr Usyk.

"No knockout, so no good. It is a brutal sport, but knockouts are everything. I'm not too happy," Joshua told 5 Live Boxing.

"I could have thrown more shots, and I should have, no excuses. But I will. That is part of coming back; you have to be your own biggest critic."

He also called out fellow Briton and WBC champion Tyson Fury, saying: "I try and provide for the fans. I know who they want. They said Tyson Fury - the ball is in his court."

Joshua has now won 25 fights, with 22 stoppages, and lost three since turning professional in 2013.

It is a second defeat for Franklin, 29, having lost to Briton Dillian Whyte in November.

Joshua returned to the O2 Arena - once a fortress for the Watford fighter - after seven years. His seven previous fights at the venue ended inside the distance, but this was not vintage Joshua.

A boisterous sellout crowd, including popstar Liam Payne and journalist Louis Theroux, were in attendance, eager to see whether Joshua - still one of the biggest names in British boxing - remained a force in the division.

Away fighter Franklin - who earlier travelled on the London underground to the arena due to traffic - entered the ring first to huge jeers. Joshua followed, marching to the ring with a look of determination.

Man City thumps Liverpool 4-1

Manchester City maintained the pressure on Premier League leaders Arsenal by shrugging off the absence of the injured Erling Haaland to outclass Liverpool with a magnificent display at Etihad Stadium.

City's 42-goal striker was ruled out with a groin injury, but Pep Guardiola's reigning champions demonstrated their all-round strength by coming from a goal down against a Liverpool side who have made life so difficult for them in the past, to run out convincing winners, BBC reported. Liverpool caught City with a counter-attack after 17 minutes to take the lead, Diogo Jota making the break before Mohamed Salah applied a thumping finish.

City responded in devastating fashion with the outstanding Jack Grealish, who made a crucial intervention on Salah when Liverpool had the chance to double their lead, crossing for Julian Alvarez to equalize after 27 minutes.

Alvarez was the creator as City went ahead 53 seconds after the break, his raking pass finding Riyad Mahrez, who crossed for Kevin de Bruyne to slide home from close range.

John Stones delivered a masterclass in an unaccustomed role which saw him



Ilkay Gundogan celebrates with Kevin De Bruyne after scoring Manchester City's third goal
● SKY SPORT

advance into midfield but also drop back into defence when required, and with City in total control Ilkay Gundogan added the third after a goalmouth skirmish. Grealish deserved a goal and it duly arrived in the 74th minute when he timed his arrival perfectly to turn in De Bruyne's cross as Liverpool ended beaten and bedraggled.

When Grealish was substituted to a standing ovation late on, he fully deserved

the accolade after a performance of the highest class. The 27-year-old England winger tormented Trent Alexander-Arnold, delivered an equalizer on a plate for Alvarez and then scored the fourth goal that gave the scoreline a more accurate reflection of City's supremacy over Liverpool.

Among all of his contributions, the lung-busting run to chase back and block Salah as the Egyptian raced clear with the option of set-

ting up Jota was vital. Seconds later he was playing in Alavarez and City were level. Grealish has grown into his role at Manchester City and clearly has the faith of his manager, who embraced him in a bear hug as he left the field.

Even stripped of Haaland, City were scintillating and gave a graphic demonstration of the gap that has opened up between them and Liverpool, who have been the only side to pro-

vide them with serious opposition in the title race in recent years.

The stylish performance of Stones, spending time breaking up attacks and spraying passes around in midfield to show what a naturally gifted footballer he is, showed that Guardiola's side have many strings to their bow and this was a huge reminder to Arsenal that they will not give up their title without a fight. Liverpool have been the

shadow on Manchester City's shoulder in the title races of recent times - now they are simply a shadow of the side that chased a historic quadruple last season. Jurgen Klopp's team may occasionally show their former selves, like in the 7-0 demolition of Manchester United, but too often this season they have been mediocre and now they face a fight to finish in the top four. The midfield pairing of Jordan Henderson and Fabinho look tired and vulnerable and Virgil van Dijk has lost much of his old authority at the heart of the defense. Alexander-Arnold had another dismal 90 minutes and Andrew Robertson, his full-back partner on the other side, did not fare much better. Both were left exposed and City took full toll.

Much is made of Liverpool's pursuit of Jude Bellingham but even if they are successful against opposition from many of Europe's elite, the idea that the brilliant teenager will cure all their ills is a delusion.

Klopp looked, in turns, furious and bemused at Liverpool's rank bad defending, lack of intensity and the manner in which they were over-powered - but given their previous form this season, he should not have been that surprised.