

F1: Session Report

2026 Japanese Grand Prix - Sunday

Third consecutive victory to kick off 2026

- Kimi Antonelli took victory in the Japanese Grand Prix with George Russell coming home fourth.
- The Italian claimed his second career win having stood on the top step of the podium in China last time out; he also becomes the youngest driver to lead the Drivers' World Championship and the first teenager to do so.
- Kimi started on pole position but dropped several places off the line after suffering excessive wheelspin, ultimately ending the opening lap in P6.
- His teammate also lost positions at the start, George dropping behind the Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton, along with the McLaren of Lando Norris.
- Both drivers fought back quickly though and gained positions before, as others stopped ahead, they cycled through to lead the race.
- George, protecting the P2 position he had gained on track earlier, pitted to cover off Leclerc whilst Kimi continued.
- The safety car was deployed the following lap following a heavy shunt for Ollie Bearman; Kimi and Lewis Hamilton, the only two front-runners yet to stop, took advantage and stopped for the Hard tyre with Kimi coming out in the lead.
- Kimi managed the restart well and had a calm run from there to the chequered flag and victory.
- George meanwhile took the restart in third but lost position to the Ferraris, firstly when running up against the harvest limit on the restart and then after experiencing an unexpected superclip several laps later.
- He regained one position by passing Lewis Hamilton and, in the closing stages, made several attempts to pass Leclerc for P3 but was unable to do so.
- The team head into the upcoming mini break in the season leading the Constructors' World Championship and with Kimi and George first and second in the drivers' standings.
- Imagery of the day is available on our [media site](#). All imagery is rights-free for editorial use.

Driver	Grid	Result	Fastest Lap	Start Tyre	Stop One
Kimi Antonelli	P1	P1	1:32.432	Medium	Hard (L22)
George Russell	P2	P4	1:32.549	Medium	Hard (L21)

Kimi Antonelli

It feels great to get my second win! I made a bad start from pole and was kicking myself that we lost so many positions. When we were in free air on the Medium tyre though, I was able to improve my pace quite a lot. We were fortunate with the timing of the Safety Car and that put us in the lead; it

made my life a lot easier! Who knows what would have happened without that, but I felt like we had the speed today to challenge for the win without it.

This is the best way to head into this mini break in the season. I am going to enjoy the moment but use the time well to work on where I can improve. As a team, and despite winning the first three races, we know we need to keep raising our game too. We had a real battle today and we know that it's not going to be easy to keep up this run of form. We're looking forward to using the time ahead of Miami well and hopefully putting ourselves in a strong position once the season resumes.

George Russell

We've had a lot of bad luck this weekend and that is unfortunate as we were definitely in the fight for the win today. After a difficult start, we'd managed to get ourselves back to P2 but stopped just one lap before the safety car was deployed. That changed the complexion of the race and unfortunately, after taking the restart in P3, we lost two more positions as a result firstly of hitting the harvesting limit and then an unexpected superclip. It was pretty frustrating but that's the way racing goes sometimes.

It's clear from this weekend that our competitors are beginning to optimise their cars much more now. We have enjoyed a great start to the season, but our rivals are hot on our heels as we saw today. The upcoming gap in the calendar will also give everyone a chance to develop further so we know that, once we're back on track in Miami, we are in for a proper fight.

Toto Wolff, CEO & Team Principal

We had an exciting race today with plenty of overtaking which hasn't always been the case here at Suzuka. It's a new way of racing where you have to think strategically in order to both pass and then make sure it sticks. It's a great challenge for both the drivers and the teams and it makes the race very unpredictable.

Sometimes you need the luck to go your way in racing and that was the case with Kimi today. He lost positions at the start but was able to get them back with a fortunately timed safety car. Whilst that was helpful to him, his pace in the second half of the race showed what he was capable of. George was on the flip side of that equation and lost out having pitted just one lap before the safety car came out. He then lost more positions, firstly on the restart as he hit the harvesting limit and was low on deployment and then secondly with an unexpected superclip. He fought hard to get back to P4, but he's certainly had more than his share of bad luck this weekend.

Andrew Shovlin, Trackside Engineering Director

Well done to Kimi on his second win. He had really strong pace and, whilst he benefited from the safety car to put him into the lead, he was able to comfortably control the race once he was in that position.

Kimi's fortune was George's misfortune. Had we stopped George a lap later, he would have retained the lead for the restart. As it happened, he dropped to P3 and lost a further place to Lewis when he hit the harvesting limit too early in the lap and had insufficient battery for the restart. He then had another frustrating issue where a bug in the software code, triggered by a button press and a gear shift at the same time, caused the power unit to go into superclip and charge the battery which allowed Charles to pass. He battled back to P4 but it was a frustrating afternoon for George.



Clearly there is a lot that we need to work on and understand in the next few weeks. We've made a great start to the season, but our competitors are closing in. Happily, we have several areas of improvement and we will make the maximum use of the gap in the calendar to develop in the places where we are not strong enough.

Contacts:

Adam McDaid

Head of Media Relations & Editorial, amcdaid@mercedesamgf1.com, +44 (0) 7918 335 332

Rosa Herrero Venegas

Senior PR Manager, rherrerovenegas@mercedesamgf1.com, +44 (0) 7469 353 191

Charlotte Davies

Senior Communications Manager, cadavies@mercedesamgf1.com, +44 (0) 7833 913 418

Charlotte Jacobe

Press Officer, cjacobe@mercedesamgf1.com, +44 (0) 7353 137 810

Further information about the Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS Formula One Team is available online: www.mercedesamgf1.com

