

THE OFFICIALS NEWSLETTER

2021 FORMULA 1 ARAMCO UNITED STATES GRAND PRIX

WELCOME

To the 9th annual running of the Formula 1 ARAMCO United States Grand Prix at Circuit of The Americas

We're back at Circuit of The Americas in Austin Texas, after a two-year hiatus. The Formula 1 ARAMCO United States Grand Prix is Round 17 in this most unusual of seasons. This is the ninth running of the F1 circus at this purpose-built, elevated road course.

This year's volunteer marshals and race officials is a diverse lot. The numbers are fluid, with last minute cancellations, but still a good turnout. Due to the variety of worldwide Covid restrictions, marshaling in America posed more obstacles than usual for the Internationals, so there are fewer to welcome this year. Visa issues and travel bans kept many of the Europeans from coming, but there is a large contingent from Azerbaijan. Other countries represented are Canada, England, India, Kuala Lumpur, Mexico, Netherlands, Scotland and Switzerland. Of those who are from the US, the largest numbers hail from Texas, including some who worked the recent MotoGP race.

Our numbers are somewhat approximate and subject to change. But generally, there are 405 Flag & Intervention Marshals, 37 Pit/Grid/Paddock Marshals, 35 Hospitality Marshals, 30 Scrutineers, seven MotoTaxi Marshals, and three Starters.

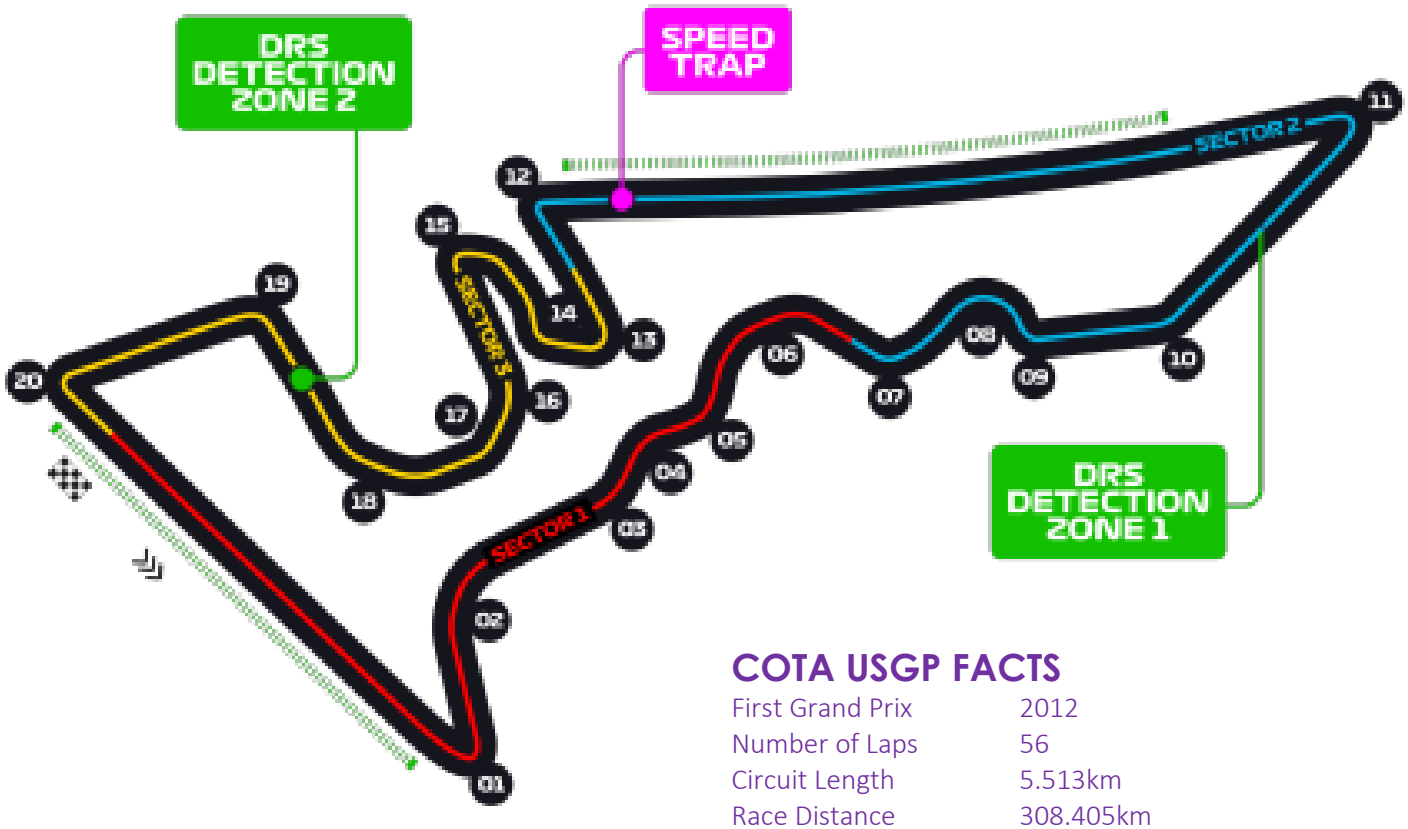
The Chiefs this year are: Chief Scrutineer: Suzanne Royce, stepping down after this weekend from F1 after 36 years; Chief of Flagging: Bryan Gregory; Chief of Pit, Grid, & Paddock: Nadja Pollard; and two new Chiefs, Chief of Intervention: Don Erickson; Chief of Start: Jamey Osborne; and Hospitality Chief: Katherine Altmeyer. Bill Armitage is again Race Chairman.

There are a few marshals who are working their first F1.

FIA Protocols are much different this year, with strict adherence and less mingling. They have worked thus far this season, which is why F1 has been allowed to happen in so many countries.

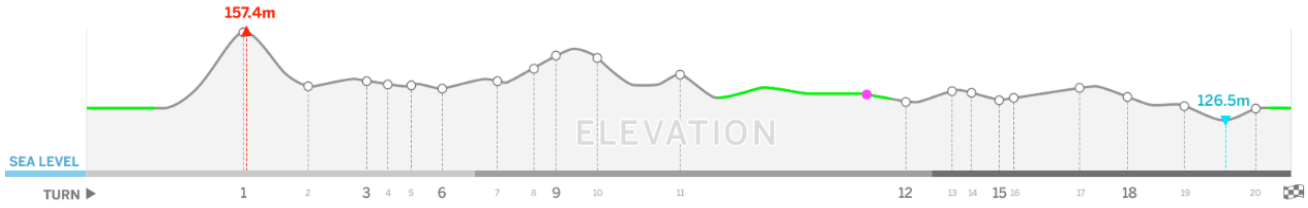
The Officials Newsletter is back, to provide a daily issue, which will have electronic distribution this year. Daily issues will be posted to a special page on the F4 website, as well as to a variety of marshaling Facebook pages. Photographers Pablo Matamoros and Ron Searle will be out taking photographs while Lynne Huntting writes and edits in the Media Center. This is your newsletter. If you have off-duty/between session photographs or tidbits to share, send on to PressSnoop@aol.com.

https://www.f4uschampionship.com/pages/2021officialsnewsletter



COTA USGP FACTS

First Grand Prix	2012
Number of Laps	56
Circuit Length	5.513km
Race Distance	308.405km
Lap Record	1:36.169 (Charles Leclerc 2019)



YOUR F1 SCHEDULE

Practice 1	Friday	11:30 – 12:30
Practice 2	Friday	15:00 – 16:00
Practice 3	Saturday	13:00 – 14:00
Qualifying	Saturday	16:00 – 17:00
Race	Sunday	14:00 – 18:00



PAST F1 USGP @ COTA WINNERS

2012	Lewis Hamilton	McLaren - Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull - Renault
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Kimi Raikkonen	Ferrari
2019	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes

F1 2021 REVIEW … SO FAR

2021 has been an intense season so far, not just for the drivers and officials but for the fans. There have been ups and downs for virtually everyone, not to mention shocks and a race without being a race.

To get you up to speed, let's have a quick run through the season so far. The season started in Bahrain with Max Verstappen starting the year off by taking pole position in his Red Bull Racing Honda alongside his title rival, Lewis Hamilton, setting the stage for the shape of the season. Verstappen led early, though a strategic pit-stop by Mercedes put Hamilton ahead after Max pitted and a tense battle for the lead ensued, with Verstappen getting ahead but unfortunately for him, by going off the circuit meaning he had to hand the place back. This left Hamilton ahead to the end, winning by less and a second. Behind these two, Sergio Perez had an inauspicious Red Bull debut with a car issue on the formation lap meaning he started from pit lane, recovering to finish 5th.

Moving to Imola in Italy, with Hamilton taking his 99th pole position. A great start by Verstappen in damp conditions, where he and Lewis lightly clashed going through Tamburello, meant a relatively comfortable victory. Hamilton finished second, but went on a long journey to get there: after losing ground early, he pitted and spun, ending up in the gravel and dropping a lap down. But a huge accident between Valtteri Bottas and George Russell meant a red flag and Lewis getting his lap back, which allowed him to climb back up through the field. The surprise result came from Lando Norris who reached the podium.

Portugal hosted the third race of the season and some calm developed over the field, outside of the Alfa Romeos, where Kimi Raikkonen looked down at the wrong time and hit his teammate from behind. Meanwhile, up front, Bottas led from pole but was overtaken by Hamilton, before developing a system issue and dropped to third by the finish behind Verstappen.

A small step to the east for Formula 1 into Spain and Hamilton took his 100th pole position, but was unable to convert that to a lead into the first corner, with a fast-starting Verstappen coming through. Mercedes took advantage of running second to take a two-stop strategy for victory over the one-stopping Verstappen. Behind them, Bottas and Charles Leclerc had a battle, with the Finn coming out the winner and getting the last podium position.

Next, Monaco, the calm before the storm. Leclerc took a surprise pole position in his Ferrari, but a pre-race drive shaft issue meant Verstappen had the front spot and continued that through to an easy win. Behind Max, there was not a lot happening with a procession from there down. The only on track overtake of the race came between Haas teammates Mick Schumacher and Nikita Mazepin.

Azerbaijan was the storm. Leclerc took back-to-back poles and was able to start the race this time, but Hamilton was able to overtake soon after the start. Verstappen took advantage of a slow pit stop by Mercedes to take the lead and the race settled down until Lap 31 when Lance Stroll's Aston Martin had a tire fail on the high-speed run down the front bendy straight, leaving debris everywhere. Four laps later, with the track cleared, racing resumed with Verstappen ahead of Perez and Hamilton. Pierre Gasly, Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel fought hard until Lap 47 when, in a surprise to everyone, Verstappen's tire also failed near the finish line. A red flag allowed all remaining cars to change tires, with a 2-lap sprint remaining. Hamilton started fast from second place, but made an error, locking up and dropping to the back of the field, allowing Perez to score his first win with Red Bull. Vettel took second place from Gasly in third.













F1 2021 REVIEW ... SO FAR (continued)

The French Grand Prix was a return to more normal times, with Verstappen and Red Bull playing the same game as Hamilton did in Spain, and taking a two-stop strategy to victory. Perez, Bottas and Norris followed.

The Styrian Grand Prix, at the Red Bull Ring, allowed Verstappen to take a dominant victory, taking his championship lead to 18 points. Bottas climbed from fifth to third, ahead of Perez and Norris taking yet another fifth place.

The Austrian race, also at the Red Bull Ring, appeared to be heading the same way as the week before, with Verstappen again cruising out front; but to change the script, Hamilton was heading for second until damage to the car, meant he dropped back behind Bottas and Norris.

The British Grand Prix introduced Sprint Qualifying. A short race on the Saturday intended to spice up the grid, which it did for Perez who went off track and dropped to the back of the race grid. From the front of the race grid, Hamilton and Verstappen fought extremely hard for half a lap before clashing at Copse corner (sorry, we're not giving away our opinion on who's to blame) which ended up with Verstappen hitting the outside wall extremely hard and Hamilton receiving a 10 second penalty to be served during the rest of the race. After a lengthy red flag for barrier repairs, Hamilton overcame the penalty to take his eighth British win, disappointing Leclerc who was leading for most of the race. Bottas lead home the McLaren pair of Norris and Daniel Ricciardo.

Hungary promised little and over-delivered after a wet start to the race saw mistakes from Bottas and Stroll leading to what can best be described as a mess into and through the first corner, eliminating Bottas, Perez, Norris, Stroll and Leclerc, with damage to others, including Verstappen. The red flag was flown and almost half an hour later the race restarted with all bar Hamilton pitting for dry tires, leaving the bizarre sight of a single car on the grid. This strategic faux pas from Mercedes allowed the second-placed Esteban Ocon to take the lead, which he never relinquished. Hamilton clawed his way back to third place at the finish, fighting hard for every single position, especially against Fernando Alonso. Vettel crossed the line second but was later disqualified for a lack of fuel for the post-race sample. Carlos Sainz ended up third, ahead of Alonso.

Belgium hosted the race that wasn't. Extreme wet weather all weekend led to an enormous qualifying crash for Norris and a surprise second place on the grid for Williams' driver, George Russell. The less said about the "race" the better, but simply put, it didn't really happen with half points then awarded to Verstappen, having taken pole position.

For the first time since 1985, Formula 1 returned to The Netherlands and, unsurprisingly, the home crowd supported Verstappen 1000%. A simple race occurred with Verstappen dominating the whole weekend, winning from Hamilton and Bottas and lapping the remainder of the field.

The unofficial home of speed, Monza, hosted the next race and the second Sprint Qualifying. Bottas had an engine penalty, relegating him to the rear of the grid for the race but not the Sprint, allowing him to take an easy win on Saturday and a big job to do on Sunday. This left Verstappen Ricciardo on the front row, with the Australian making a brilliant start, jumping into the lead of the race. Behind, Verstappen was unable to overtake and played the waiting game until the pit stops. When he stopped, he had a very slow stop, dropping him out of the chase for the win. Meanwhile, Hamilton moved up until he also stopped and also had a slow stop, when he then exited pit lane barely ahead of Verstappen as they headed to the first corner. Verstappen tried to overtake, and the two touched again, but this time they stacked instead of spinning, leaving both beached and many fans arguing for days about fault. Ricciardo was able to hold onto his lead despite pressure from his teammate, Norris, with the McLaren duo getting the first 1-2 for the team in many years. Bottas was able to take advantage of the shenanigans ahead to go from the back to a spectacular third place.

F1 2021 REVIEW ... SO FAR (conclusion)

The Russian Grand Prix was expected to be a by-the-book race. Verstappen took engine penalties, meaning he started at the back, while up front Lando Norris took his first pole position and was heading for victory until the weather gods stepped in. The race had settled down quite quickly with Norris ahead of Hamilton until a handful of laps from the end when a rain storm started to pass over the track. Drivers started to pit for intermediate tires with Norris, Hamilton, Leclerc, Vettel and Ocon holding on for as long as possible. Of the leading pair, Hamilton blinked first when his team told him he had to pit and Norris held on, planning to run to the end of the race but the rain got heavier and became too much for slick tires. Norris lost the lead to Hamilton and ended up eighth after pitting. Hamilton was able to then take his 100th Formula 1 victory.

Finally, there was the Turkish race which promised much but didn't deliver much. Light rain throughout the race meant that all drivers ran intermediate tires, with many tempted to wait as long as possible to pit with the rain backing off at times. Hamilton tried to run to the end without stopping but eventually relented to his team, though disadvantaged, he dropped down to fifth. Bottas took his first victory of the year from Verstappen and Perez. Ocon set a record of his own being the first driver since Mika Salo in a Tyrrell in 1997 to complete a non- red flagged race without a pit stop.

And so here we are at COTA, waiting for the first US GP in a couple of years in front of a sold-out crowd. Verstappen leads Hamilton but a mere six points, meaning this championship will likely go down to the last race and Sunday's will be pivotal.

Article by Michael Shaw, Australian Grand Prix Officials Gazette Team

