



Race Preview

2018 AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX

27 – 29 April 2018

The early-season sequence of flyaway races draws to a close this weekend with F1 heading to the Baku City Circuit, home of the Azerbaijan Grand Prix for Round Four of the 2018 FIA Formula One World Championship.

The only grand prix held below sea-level doesn't follow the conventions of street circuit design. Baku features the low grip, tight turns and unforgiving barriers expected of the type, but also encourages overtaking as well as ultra-high speeds on the 2.1km pit straight, on which drivers spend over 20 seconds at full throttle.

Keeping brakes and tyres warm for the excellent passing opportunity into the Turn One left-hander has been problematic in the past – and this is likely to be exacerbated by the move from a late June race to the cooler temperatures of late April. Another major issue for teams to consider during practice is finding an acceptable compromise between performance on the fast start-finish section of track and on the low-speed middle sector of the lap. The race's short history suggests there isn't a one-size fits all solution.

Pirelli have returned to a sequential tyre allocation this weekend with the soft, supersoft and ultrasoft compounds available. After pre-season testing these three tyres were commonly held to have the smallest performance differentials in the Pirelli range, a belief confirmed by the time gaps in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix. The low-speed sections of the Baku City Circuit will, however, magnify the performance gap between the tyres.

In the Drivers' Championship Sebastian Vettel comes to Baku with a nine-point lead over Lewis Hamilton but the picture is less clear in the Constructors' Championship. After three rounds Ferrari have two victories, Red Bull the other but Mercedes may count themselves unlucky, given that safety cars fell unkindly for them while leading in both Australia and China. Nevertheless, consistent scoring means that Mercedes hold a one-point lead over Ferrari.



BAKU CITY CIRCUIT

Length of lap: 6.003km

Lap record: 1:43.441

(Sebastian Vettel, Ferrari, 2017)

Start line/finish line offset: 0.104km

Total number of race laps: 51

Total race distance: 306.049km

Pitlane speed limits: 80km/h in practice, qualifying, and the race

CIRCUIT NOTES

- ▶ The kerb at the apex of Turn 8 has been replaced.

DRS ZONES

- ▶ There are two DRS zones in Baku. The detection point of the first is at the SC2 line, while activation is 54m after Turn 2. The detection point of the second zone is at the apex of Turn 20, with activation 347m after Turn 20.

ROUND 04	AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX	START TIME	16:10 Local - 12:10 GMT
RACE DATE:	29 APR 2018	CIRCUIT LENGTH:	6.003km
CIRCUIT NAME:	BAKU CITY CIRCUIT - AZERBAIJAN	RACE DISTANCE:	306.049km
NUMBER OF LAPS:	51	LAP RECORD:	1:43.441 - S Vettel [2017]

Note: Speeds, Gears, Lap & Sector times are based upon 2017 Qualifying data

KEY		Speed Kmh	Sector Time	Timing Sector
Braking	1303	Gear	T3	24.4
			Lap Time	1:40.6
	Sector 1		Sector 2	
	Circuit		Start	
	DRS Detection		DRS Activation	
	FIA Medical & Safety Cars		Marshal Posts	



FAST FACTS

- ▶ This is the second Azerbaijan Grand Prix and the third Formula One grand prix to be held on the Baku City Circuit. The circuit made its debut with the 2016 European Grand Prix.
- ▶ Nico Rosberg won the inaugural event in Baku for Mercedes, recording a grand chelem of pole (his 25th), victory, fastest lap and every lap led. Last year's winner was Daniel Ricciardo for Red Bull Racing. The Australian won from tenth on the grid having crashed in qualifying.
- ▶ Mercedes are the only team to feature on the podium at both races here. Following Rosberg's 2016 win, Valtteri Bottas finished second last year. Mercedes are also the most successful engine manufacturer, having had two teams on the podium at both races: Sergio Pérez finished third in 2016 for Force India, and Lance Stroll finished third for Williams last year. The other driver to feature on the podium in Baku is Sebastian Vettel, who finished second for Ferrari in 2016.
- ▶ Of the 60 podium places on offer in 2017, 59 were taken by the drivers from Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull Racing.
- ▶ Third place for Williams' Lance Stroll in Azerbaijan was the only visit to the podium by a driver from outside the top three teams in the final standings of the Constructors' Championship. It was Stroll's first, and so far only, podium.
- ▶ The Azerbaijan Grand Prix was the most overtaking-friendly race of 2017, with 42 of the season's 435 successful flying lap overtaking manoeuvres.
- ▶ Azerbaijan is the only country on the 2018 calendar in which Lewis Hamilton has not been on the podium, and one of only two where he has not had a victory – the other being France, where his best result was third in 2007. Kimi Räikkönen has also been on the podium in every country on the 2018 schedule except Azerbaijan.
- ▶ The Baku City Circuit is one of six tracks to have hosted grands prix of different titles. The others are Brands Hatch (British and European), Jerez (Spanish and European), The Nürburgring (German, Luxembourg, European), Imola (Italian and San Marino) and Dijon (French and Swiss). There is also a case to be made for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which has hosted both the United States Grand Prix and the Indianapolis 500, the latter being a round of the F1 World Championship between 1950 and 1960.
- ▶ Brendon Hartley, Pierre Gasly, Sergey Sirotkin and Charles Leclerc are making their first F1 visit to the circuit, though Hartley is the only circuit debutant. The other three have all appeared in junior categories and all have featured on the podium. Leclerc and Sirotkin drove here last year in Formula 2. Leclerc won the feature race and came second in the sprint, while Sirotkin was tenth and fourth. The Russian also raced in Baku during the final season of GP2, finishing second and third. Gasly likewise appeared in 2016, retiring from the feature race but finishing second in the sprint.
- ▶ Mercedes have gone three races without a victory for the first time in the turbo-hybrid era. They have previously lost consecutive races only twice: in 2014 when Ricciardo won the Hungarian and Belgian Grands Prix, and last year when Max Verstappen's victory in Mexico was followed by victory for Vettel in Brazil.

RACE STEWARDS BIOGRAPHIES

GARRY CONNELLY

DIRECTOR, GLOBAL INSTITUTE FOR MOTOR SPORT SAFETY; DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF MOTOR SPORT SAFETY; F1, WTCC STEWARD; FIA WORLD MOTOR SPORT COUNCIL MEMBER

Garry Connelly has been involved in motor sport since the late 1960s. A long-time rally competitor, Connelly was instrumental in bringing the World Rally Championship to Australia in 1988 and served as Chairman of the Organising Committee, Board member and Clerk of Course of Rally Australia until December 2002. He has been an FIA Steward and FIA Observer since 1989, covering the FIA's World Rally Championship, World Touring Car Championship and Formula One Championship. He is a director of the Australian Institute of Motor Sport Safety and of the Global Institute of Motor Sport Safety. He is a member of the FIA World Motor Sport Council.



DENNIS DEAN

FIA WORLD MOTOR SPORT COUNCIL MEMBER; MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL SPORTING CODE REVIEW COMMISSION; MEMBER, COMMISSION INTERNATIONALE DE KARTING; FORMULA E STEWARD

Dennis Dean has been involved in motor sport since becoming a scrutineer with the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) in the late 1970s. He has served at national level as a scrutineer, steward, and race director, including 10 years as either assistant chief steward or chief steward (race director) of the SCCA's National Championship Runoffs. He has scrutineered at 10 US Formula One races, in Las Vegas, Indianapolis and Austin. He was also vice president of Club Racing and Rally/Solo for SCCA. He currently serves as a member of both the FIA's International Sporting Code Review Commission and the Commission Internationale de Karting. He is also chairman of the Steering Committee for the SCCA Hall of fame.



TOM KRISTENSEN

1980 NINE TIMES LE MANS WINNER, GERMAN F3 CHAMPION (1991), JAPANESE F3 CHAMPION (1993) ALMS CHAMPION (2001); PRESIDENT OF THE FIA DRIVERS' COMMISSION, FIA WORLD MOTOR SPORT COUNCIL MEMBER

Denmark's Tom Kristensen is the most successful driver in the history of the Le Mans 24-Hour race having won the endurance event nine times before retiring from competition in November 2014. Kristensen's outstanding career saw him race in single-seaters, touring cars as well as testing in Formula One. However, it is for his achievements in sportscars that he is correctly most lauded. His first Le Mans win came in 1997, driving for the Joest Racing team. After two years competing with BMW, he rejoined Joest, now racing as Audi Sport Team Joest, in 2000, winning three Le Mans 24-Hours in succession with the team. He won again with Bentley in 2003 before returning to the wheel of Audi machines to win in 2004-'05, 2008 and 2013. In 2013 he also won the FIA World Endurance Championship title.



FORMULA ONE TIMETABLE & FIA MEDIA SCHEDULE

THURSDAY

Press conference 15.00

FRIDAY

Practice session 1 13.00-14.30

Press conference 15.00

Practice session 2 17.00-18.30

SATURDAY

Practice session 3 14.00-15.00

Qualifying 17.00-18.00

Followed by unilateral and press conference

SUNDAY

Drivers' Parade 14.40

Race 16.10

Followed by podium interviews and press conference

ADDITIONAL MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

QUALIFYING

All drivers eliminated in Q1 or Q2 will be available for media interviews immediately after the end of each session, as will drivers who participated in Q3, but who are not required for the post-qualifying press conference. The TV Pen is located in between the media centre and paddock.

RACE

Any driver retiring before the end of the race will be made available at the TV pen interview area. In addition, during the race every team will make available at least one senior spokesperson for interview by officially accredited TV crews. A list of those nominated will be made available in the media centre.

FIA COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

press@fia.com

T +33 1 43 12 58 15

