

Hamilton Wins Russian Grand Prix in Sochi

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Lewis Hamilton

SOCHI — Lewis Hamilton took a huge step toward retaining his Formula One title by winning the Russian Grand Prix on Sunday as his main rival Nico Rosberg failed to finish.

Hamilton can now win his third career title at the next race in Texas, while his Mercedes team retained the constructors' title after a season in which the silver cars have dominated almost every race.

Hamilton started second behind Rosberg but took over the lead when his Mercedes teammate experienced a throttle problem that forced him to slow to a crawl and then come into the pits to retire.

Hamilton then cruised to victory by 5.9 seconds over Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel, with Sergio Perez third for Force India, 23 seconds further behind.

For the second year running, Hamilton received his winner's trophy from Russian President

Vladimir Putin, who also greeted the top three drivers ahead of the podium ceremony.

Felipe Massa was fourth for Williams, with Russian driver Daniil Kvyat elevated to fifth by Raikkonen's penalty in a pleasing result for the home crowd.

Two major accidents brought out the safety car in the early stages.

The fight for the lead on the first lap between Hamilton and Rosberg was almost immediately curtailed by a first-lap incident when Nico Hulkenberg's Force India span, collecting the Sauber of Marcus Ericsson. Both were left stranded, bringing out the safety car.

On lap 12, Romain Grosjean lost control of his Lotus and hurtled into the barriers at high speed, wrecking the car. Despite the violence of the impact, Grosjean was uninjured.

Toro Rosso's Carlos Sainz Jr., who was only cleared to race by doctors on Sunday morning following a heavy crash in practice, started last. The Spaniard stormed through the field into the top 10, but his race ended late on when his brakes overheated.

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