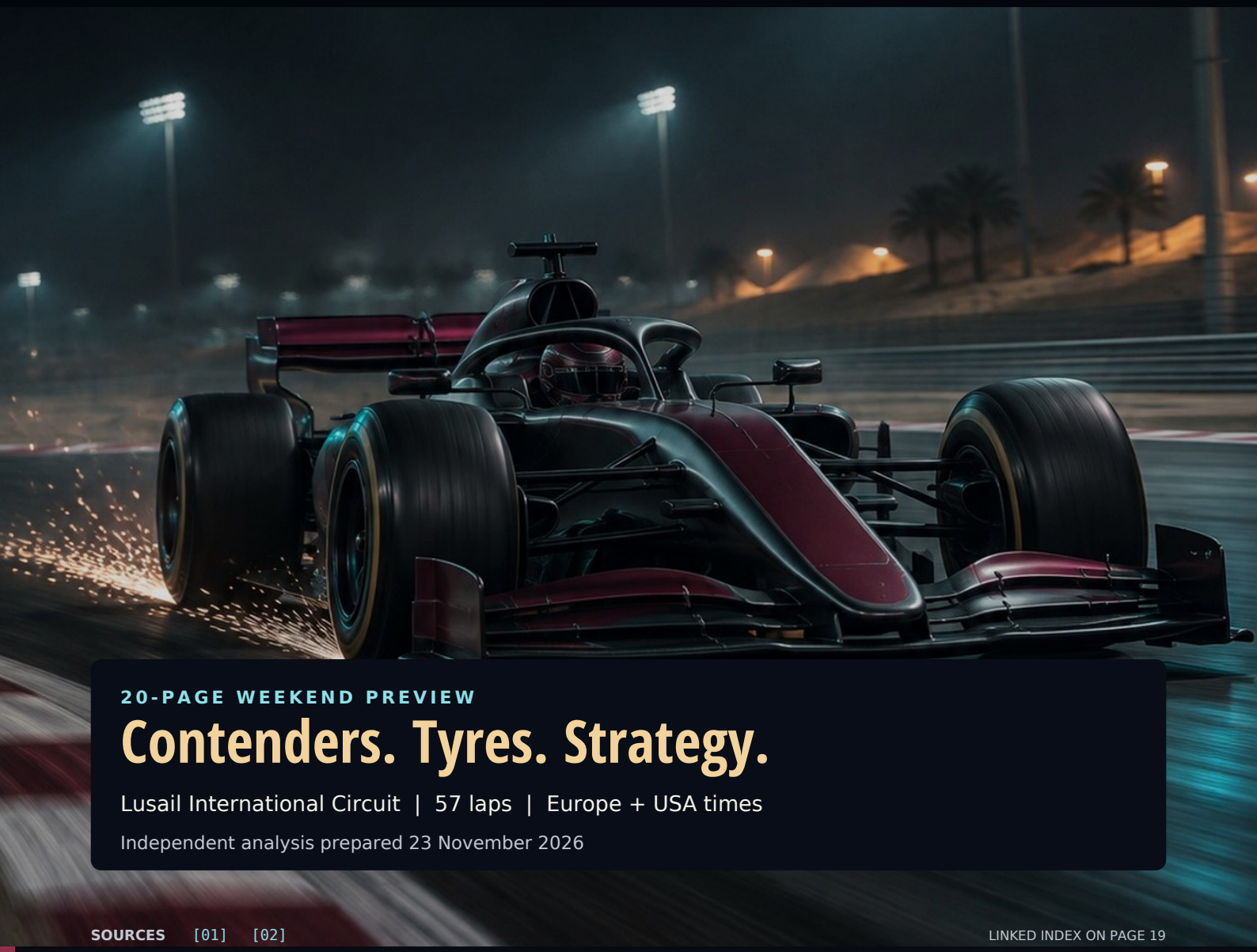
27-29 NOVEMBER 2026

QATAR GRAND PRIX

HIGH-SPEED PRESSURE UNDER THE LIGHTS



20-PAGE WEEKEND PREVIEW

Contenders. Tyres. Strategy.

Lusail International Circuit | 57 laps | Europe + USA times

Independent analysis prepared 23 November 2026

SOURCES [01] [02]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

THE READER'S GUIDE

Inside the weekend

The dates, the contenders, and the decisions that can change 57 laps.

03 Qatar at a glance
04 The titles are settled. The racing is not.
05 Lusail rewards rhythm
06 Champions with unfinished business
07 Verstappen brings the latest momentum
08 The double-podium opportunity
09 A cleaner weekend is the first gain
10 The points fight can move quickly
11 Put the lap together first
12 Look beyond the fastest lap
13 A 27-lap cap changes the plan
14 Three stints, more than one route
15 Plan the pass before the straight
16 The neutralisation calculation
17 Small gaps. Large consequences.
18 The pre-practice shortlist
19 The evidence behind the preview
20 Disclaimer

THE THREE STORIES

Can Mercedes convert its season-long strength? Can Verstappen win again after Vegas? Can McLaren erase a nine-point teams' gap to Red Bull?

How to read this preview

The fact panels use the official schedule, published standings, and the latest available tyre reporting. Team comparisons and race scenarios are editorial analysis written before Qatar practice. A fast lap on Friday can change the order; this guide shows which evidence should change your view.

Prepared on 23 November 2026. Session times are listed for Europe and the United States. Photos are illustrative, AI-generated racing scenes, rather than documentary images of the 2026 event.

SOURCES [01] [02] [10]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

PLAN YOUR WEEKEND

Qatar at a glance

27-29 November. Three practice sessions, Saturday qualifying, and Sunday's Grand Prix.

NOV	F1	GMT	CET	ET	PT
Fri 27	FP1	13:30	14:30	08:30	05:30
Fri 27	FP2	17:00	18:00	12:00	09:00
Sat 28	FP3	14:30	15:30	09:30	06:30
Sat 28	Quali	18:00	19:00	13:00	10:00
Sun 29	Race	16:00	17:00	11:00	08:00

Start times. Qatar = GMT +3 | CET = GMT +1 | ET = GMT -5 | PT = GMT -8

The session that deserves your attention

Friday's second practice is the first scheduled running at 20:00 Qatar time. Its evening conditions make it the session to study for balance and long-run consistency. Compare drivers on the same compound and similar stint length rather than treating the overall order as a race forecast.

Keep the two series separate

The support programme includes a Formula 2 Sprint on Saturday. Formula 1 itself follows a conventional format here in 2026. That distinction matters: there is no F1 Sprint result to settle the pecking order before Grand Prix qualifying.

> **EUROPE + USA**
> Sunday's race starts at 16:00 GMT, 17:00 CET, 11:00 ET, and 08:00 PT. In Qatar it is 19:00. All listed sessions fall on the same calendar date in these time zones. Recheck the official timetable before watching.

SOURCES [01] [02] [10]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

THE CHAMPIONSHIP PICTURE

The titles are settled. The racing is not.

Antonelli and Mercedes arrive as champions. The meaningful tension is now further down the tables.

DRIVER	TEAM	POINTS
Kimi Antonelli	Mercedes	402
Max Verstappen	Red Bull	304
Lewis Hamilton	Ferrari	267
George Russell	Mercedes	264
Lando Norris	McLaren	264
Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	250

Official standings snapshot, 23 November 2026.

What the numbers actually say

Antonelli's advantage over Verstappen is 98 points. With Qatar and Abu Dhabi left as conventional Grands Prix, there are only 50 race points available to a driver. Mercedes leads Ferrari by 149 points; two one-two finishes would yield a maximum of 86 team points. These are settled titles, not last-minute championship deciders.

The sharper fight is behind them

Hamilton is just three points ahead of Russell and Norris. Red Bull's published teams' total is nine ahead of McLaren. Both battles can change materially in one afternoon. Watch where those drivers qualify and whether teammates can support a coherent pit sequence.

EDITORIAL FOCUS

Race victory, the runner-up positions, and cleaner execution still carry weight. Avoid mistaking a comfortable title margin for a predictable Qatar result.

SOURCES [03] [04] [11]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

CIRCUIT INTELLIGENCE

Lusail rewards rhythm

A 5.419 km lap, 57 race laps, and repeated high-speed tyre loading.

5.419	57	308.611
KILOMETRES PER LAP	RACE LAPS	KM RACE DISTANCE

A connected test

Think of a lap as a chain of commitments. A small correction in a fast corner can affect the next entry, the tyre's workload, and the opportunity to follow another car. The useful question is whether a driver can repeat a controlled line while carrying race fuel.

How to watch the balance

Look for a car that needs fewer steering corrections through the faster sequences. Then ask whether that composure lasts after the opening laps of a stint. One tidy qualifying run is evidence of peak speed; repeatable balance is stronger evidence for Sunday.

The late-lap exit matters

A driver who reaches the following straight in good shape can plan an attack. A car that slides on exit may spend energy recovering the gap. This is why raw straight-line speed should be read alongside the corner that feeds it.

> **WATCH FOR**
> The same car looking calm on consecutive laps, not merely one spectacular sector. Wind and track conditions can change between sessions; this preview does not treat a climate average as a forecast.

SOURCES [01] [07]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

MERCEDES / THE BENCHMARK

Champions with unfinished business

Antonelli's title is secure; turning race pace into an uncomplicated finish is the immediate task.



Read the result and the race separately

Antonelli finished fourth in Las Vegas, while Russell was ninth. Both had been involved at the front before late trouble. The finishing order therefore gives a warning about execution rather than a complete measure of their underlying challenge.

What would make Mercedes the Qatar favourite?

A balanced car on evening long runs, a competitive first timed qualifying lap, and enough tyre flexibility for the required stops would support the strongest case. Watch whether both drivers can sustain pace without repeated corrections in the fast sections.

There is also a practical two-car question: can the team separate the stop windows without leaving either driver vulnerable? Track position will not excuse a tyre set that has exhausted its permitted mileage.

> **PRE-PRACTICE LEAN**
>
> Mercedes belongs on the leading shortlist because of its season, but Qatar's high-speed response must confirm it. A title already won is not evidence that either driver will run cautiously.

SOURCES [03] [05] [06]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

RED BULL / THE VEGAS WINNER

Verstappen brings the latest momentum

A win is useful evidence. It is not a transfer certificate between two very different circuits.

0.639s
VERSTAPPEN'S VEGAS WINNING MARGIN

304
DRIVER POINTS

9-POINT TEAM CUSHION

What Vegas established

Verstappen beat Norris by 0.639 seconds after 50 laps in Las Vegas. He arrives in Qatar second in the drivers' standings. The immediate case for him is clear: he has just converted a close race at the front into a victory.

What still needs testing

Lusail asks different questions of the car. Watch his consistency once the tyres have accumulated laps, then compare the gap through the quicker sequences. If he can stay close without sliding, a later attack becomes a credible route to the lead.

The second-car contribution

Red Bull cannot rely on one result if McLaren puts two cars near the front. Its nine-point teams' cushion is small enough for pit execution and the second car's finishing position to matter. The comparison is team points gained, not simply which lead driver finishes ahead.

> **UPGRADE OR DOWNGRADE THE CASE**
> Upgrade Verstappen if strong qualifying is backed by steady evening race runs. Downgrade the certainty if his best lap hides a rapid fall-off or poor running in traffic.

SOURCES [03] [04] [05]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

MCLAREN / TWO-CAR THREAT

The double-podium opportunity

Norris and Piastri leave Vegas with momentum and a close teams' target ahead.

33	29	+4
SECOND + THIRD	FIRST + EIGHTH	ILLUSTRATIVE GAIN

An arithmetic example, not a forecast or a confirmed result.

Two credible race pieces

Norris and Piastri finished second and third in Las Vegas. Their team report describes stronger running on the medium tyre, but that observation belongs to Vegas. It should start the Qatar investigation rather than end it.

Where the upside sits

McLaren's attractive scenario is two cars qualifying in the leading group and retaining enough flexibility to avoid a damaging double stack. That allows the team to pressure a rival with one car while protecting the other.

A fast final sector alone is not the whole story. If the car follows well for several laps, it can keep strategic choices open. If it loses touch in the corners, the pit wall may have to use an early stop to recover a position.

A simple points illustration

Norris second and Piastri third would produce 33 points. A rival team finishing first and eighth would collect 29. McLaren would gain four in that example, leaving five of the current nine-point gap. It shows why a double podium need not automatically move a team ahead.

WHAT TO CONFIRM

Top-group pace on comparable runs, two clean qualifying laps, and a workable sequence of pit stops. The points example is arithmetic, not a forecast of Sunday's finish.

SOURCES [04] [05] [06]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

FERRARI / RESET THE EXECUTION

A cleaner weekend is the first gain

Hamilton and Leclerc need a coordinated race before anyone can price in a recovery.

267	3 POINTS	264
HAMILTON	THE CURRENT MARGIN	RUSSELL / NORRIS

Why execution belongs in the preview

Hamilton was seventh and Leclerc tenth in the official Vegas result. Both received time penalties during that race, with Leclerc's following contact between the teammates. That is a concrete reason to watch how Ferrari manages its own cars.

The Qatar response

Friday's useful signal is straightforward: does the car look settled over several laps, and do the drivers describe a balance they can trust? A strong qualifying position gives the team options. A split or compromised grid puts more pressure on recovery strategy.

Avoid a second problem

If the Ferraris meet on track, clear sequencing matters. Time lost racing each other can bring another competitor into the stop window. The right test is whether the team can let both drivers maximise pace while keeping the tyre and pit plans coherent.

PRE-PRACTICE LEAN

A rebound is possible, but keep Ferrari behind the leading shortlist until Qatar running shows the pace. Hamilton's three-point edge over Russell and Norris gives each finish immediate significance.

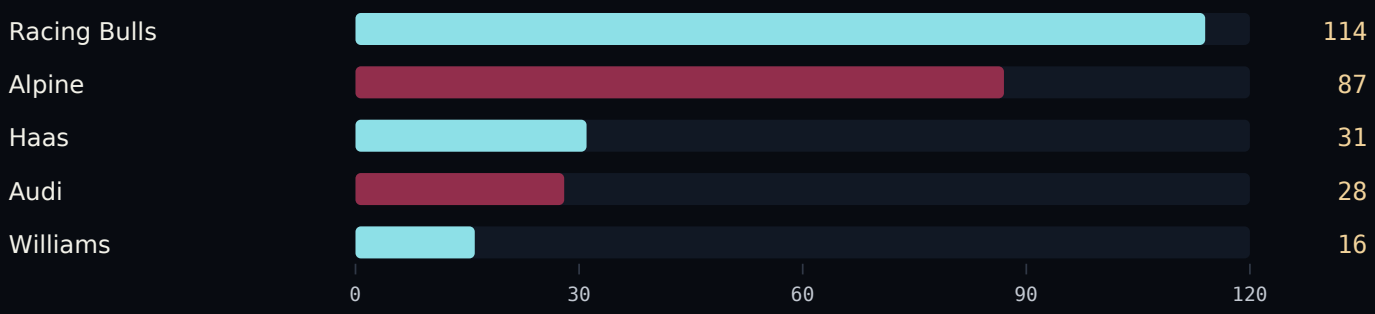
SOURCES [03] [04] [05]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

BEYOND THE PODIUM

The points fight can move quickly

Alpine has the freshest midfield result. Racing Bulls still holds the larger teams' total.



Alpine: ask for a repeat

Gasly and Colapinto finished fifth and sixth in Las Vegas. For Qatar, the useful check is whether both cars can qualify near the points positions and repeat that pace in the evening. A circuit-specific lift matters more than a headline about general momentum.

Racing Bulls: defend the position

The official teams' table lists Racing Bulls on 114 points and Alpine on 87, a 27-point gap. That is meaningful room, but not a reason to accept a messy weekend. A clean start and a timely response to a rival's stop can protect valuable points.

The next group

Haas sits on 31, Audi on 28, and Williams on 16. One points finish can move the closest pair. Compare their qualifying positions with the traffic their first stop is likely to release them into. A tidy midfield race can beat a faster car trapped in the wrong group.

WATCHLIST

Gasly and Colapinto for continuation; Lawson for a response; Bearman, Hulkenberg, Bortoleto, and Sainz for the lower-points contest. This is a watchlist, not a predicted order.

SOURCES [03] [04] [05]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

SATURDAY / QUALIFYING

Put the lap together first

Lusail gives a quick car several chances to lose a lap through one untidy sequence.

01 BANK A CLEAN LAP

02 LEAVE A GAP

03 JOIN THE SECTORS

Read the first attempt

The opening representative lap tells you whether a driver has a workable base. A strong first attempt reduces the need to find everything in the final run. A driver who repeatedly abandons laps may have pace that the timing table never turns into a grid position.

Compare sectors with context

A personal-best sector is only useful if it can be combined with the rest of the lap. Watch the entry into the next section after a driver attacks one corner. A gain that causes a later correction may not survive on the stopwatch.

Track evolution can change the risk

An improving surface can reward a late attempt, but traffic or an interrupted session can erase that plan. Look at each team's release timing, the gap to the next car, and whether a banked lap remains competitive.

> **SATURDAY CHECKLIST**
> One representative lap in each segment; no repeated boundary errors; a consistent balance; a legal, confirmed grid position. Treat late penalties and official decisions as changes to the starting point of every Sunday scenario.

SOURCES [02]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

FRIDAY / THE PACE TEST

Look beyond the fastest lap

A clean comparison needs more than a headline time from a different tyre or run programme.



Make the comparisons fair

Start with compound, time of session, and approximate tyre age. Fuel load and deployment programmes are not fully public, so avoid pretending that a precise ranking can be extracted from a handful of laps.

Watch the shape of the run

Compare whether the lap times settle, deteriorate gradually, or contain isolated slow laps in traffic. A single outlier can distort an average. A sequence with similar pace and few corrections is the better starting point for a Sunday view.

A real question for each contender

Mercedes: can the car hold its balance? Red Bull: can Verstappen stay close in the fast corners? McLaren: do both cars maintain their pace? Ferrari: is there an evening baseline that supports a cleaner race? Those questions can be answered without claiming access to the teams' fuel data.

WHAT CHANGES THE PREVIEW

Several comparable, repeatable laps should move your view more than one purple sector. The final qualifying simulation helps with Saturday; the extended run helps with Sunday.

SOURCES [02] [07]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

TYRES / MILEAGE MANAGEMENT

A 27-lap cap changes the plan

The current reported cap makes the remaining life of each individual set a strategic asset.



The planning baseline

Pirelli's allocation is C1 hard, C2 medium, and C3 soft. Published Qatar reporting puts the maximum at 27 cumulative laps per set. Over a normal 57-lap race, two new sets cover only 54 laps: a completed full-distance race therefore needs at least three sets and two changes.

It is not just race mileage

The reported counting rules include earlier session mileage and Safety Car or Virtual Safety Car laps. A set with six counted laps enters the race with no more than 21 available. A slow race phase does not reset that allowance.

Keep the tyre ledger visible

A fast car on the wrong remaining mileage can lose tactical options. The team needs a legal next set before choosing whether to cover an undercut or stay out. The tyre with the highest count controls a set assembled from differently used tyres, according to the published report.

CHECK THE FINAL EVENT DOCUMENTS

This guide uses the 2026 reporting, not the 2025 limit of 25 laps. FIA/Pirelli updates issued during the race week take priority over any pre-event example here.

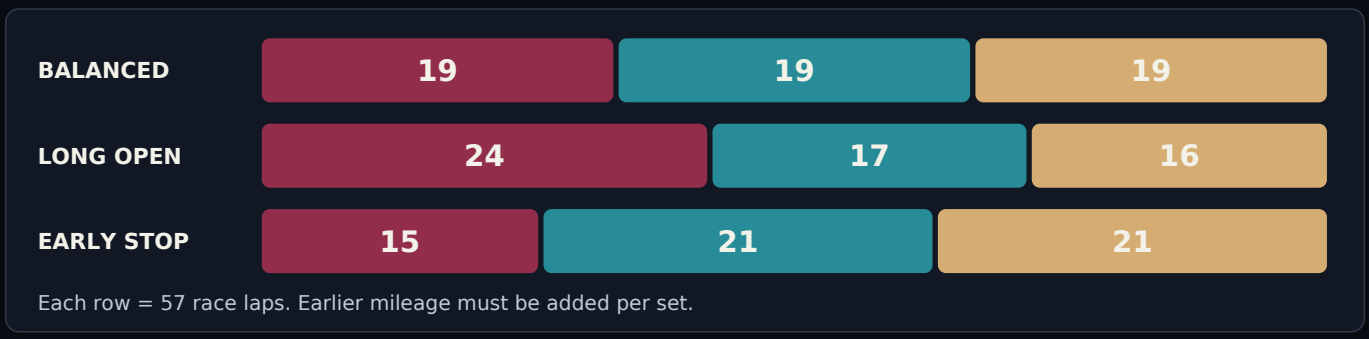
SOURCES [07] [08] [12]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

STRATEGY / WORKED EXAMPLES

Three stints, more than one route

These examples test the mileage arithmetic. They do not identify the fastest Qatar strategy.



Each row = 57 race laps. Earlier mileage must be added per set.

The balanced route

A sequence of 19, 19, and 19 race laps spreads the work evenly. It requires enough remaining mileage on all three selected sets. The real advantage depends on traffic, compound performance, and the time lost making each stop.

The long opening

A 24-17-16 sequence creates a different opportunity: keep the first stint running while rivals stop, then attack with shorter later runs. It also requires the opening set to have at least 24 laps left. A six-lap-used set cannot do that.

The early reaction

A 15-21-21 sequence can represent covering an early rival stop. Before choosing it, the pit wall must know which traffic the car will meet and whether the last two sets have the necessary remaining allowance.

THE LEGALITY CHECK

Each example totals 57 race laps. Add every set's earlier counted mileage before comparing it with 27. These lengths do not settle compound-use requirements or supersede the final event instructions.

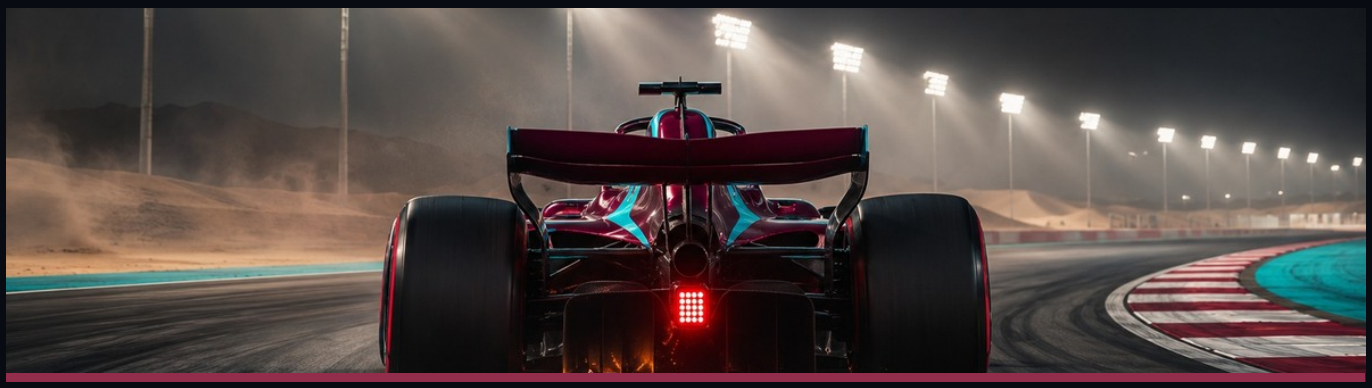
SOURCES [07] [08]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

2026 / RACING TOOLS

Plan the pass before the straight

Energy and exit speed are part of the same attacking decision.



Use the current vocabulary

Active Aero changes the front and rear wing configuration for designated running conditions. Boost is the driver-operated deployment tool for attack or defence. Overtake Mode gives an eligible following driver extra electrical capability; it is not the old DRS system.

Make the next attempt possible

The relevant question is whether a driver can arrive close enough, with usable energy, while controlling the tyres. A costly slide on the preceding exit can turn a promising gap into a defensive lap. Watch the end of one attempt as well as the beginning.

Avoid invented circuit settings

This guide does not assign activation locations, deployment maps, or an exact speed advantage at Qatar. Use the confirmed event information and the live timing. The rules explain the available tools; they do not tell us how much energy a specific car will have on a specific lap.

BROADCAST CUE

After a driver attacks, watch whether they can hold the position or immediately face a counterattack. The sequence is more revealing than a single speed-trap number.

SOURCES [09]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

RACE CONTROL / TURNING POINTS

The neutralisation calculation

An interruption can reduce the cost of a stop while tightening the mileage problem.

7	50	27
LAPS COMPLETED	RACE LAPS LEFT	MAXIMUM PER SET

Illustrative early interruption. Fifty remaining laps cannot fit on one new set.

Before the race settles

The first lap can undo a strong qualifying result through contact or an evasive move. Watch which leading cars keep clean track position and which are forced into a recovery plan. Do not build every strategy around a perfectly ordered opening.

A cheaper stop still needs a legal next stint

A Safety Car can make stopping attractive, but the final distance remains. In an illustrative 57-lap race, a stop after lap seven leaves 50 race laps. Under a 27-lap cap, a single remaining set cannot cover that. The team still needs to plan another change.

Two cars can complicate one call

If teammates arrive together, a double stack adds waiting time for the second car. Splitting the response can create a different risk if the track position changes. Watch the available gap and the two sets the team intends to use next.

> **NO PROBABILITY CLAIM**
> A neutralisation is a scenario to prepare for, not a guaranteed feature of Qatar. The stop example illustrates mileage, not an assumed Safety Car lap or a precise pit-loss figure.

SOURCES [08]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

THE REMAINING STAKES

Small gaps. Large consequences.

The points battles behind the champions can change with one clean result.

3	9	50
HAMILTON'S MARGIN	RED BULL'S MARGIN	DRIVER POINTS LEFT

Hamilton, Russell, and Norris

Hamilton has 267 points; Russell and Norris each have 264. If Hamilton finishes fifth and either rival wins, that rival gains 15 points and moves 12 ahead. If Hamilton is second and the rival third, his advantage grows by three to six. These are examples, not selected finishing orders.

Red Bull and McLaren

Red Bull begins nine points ahead in the official teams' standings. McLaren must gain ten to move ahead outright in Qatar; a gain of nine produces a tie, with countback deciding the order. The simplest race target is therefore the combined score of both cars.

Do not lose the wider picture

Verstappen leads Hamilton by 37 points with 50 still available. A strong Qatar result can shape the fight for second, but the exact outcome depends on several drivers and tie-breaks. Treat the official post-race table as the final calculation.

> **EDITORIAL TARGET**
> Follow the net points swing, not just the position of the first car. A teammate's sixth place can decide whether a headline podium actually closes a gap.

SOURCES [03] [04]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

FINAL ANALYSIS

The pre-practice shortlist

A conditional outlook built from the season and the latest race, ready to change when Qatar running begins.

LEADING SHORTLIST	MERCEDES / VERSTAPPEN
PODIUM PRESSURE	MCLAREN
CONDITIONAL REBOUND	FERRARI

Leading cases: Mercedes and Verstappen

Mercedes has the season-long benchmark. Verstappen has the latest victory. That makes them the strongest starting shortlist, with different evidence behind each. Neither has yet shown its 2026 Qatar pace; practice and qualifying must decide how narrow that shortlist becomes.

Podium pressure: McLaren

A two-car threat is McLaren's most compelling route to a strong weekend. If both drivers qualify near the front and the long-run comparison holds up, the team can force rivals to manage more than one attack.

Conditional rebound: Ferrari

A cleaner weekend is the first requirement. Upgrade Ferrari when the high-speed balance and grid position support a recovery, rather than carrying a reputation into a new set of conditions.

THE THREE DECIDERS

Repeatable evening pace. Track position without overusing the tyres. Two well-timed stops with legal sets. This preview makes no claim of fixed win probabilities, confirmed odds, or a guaranteed finishing order.

SOURCES [03] [05] [07]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19

SOURCES / EDITORIAL RECORD

The evidence behind the preview

Checked 23 November 2026, before the first Qatar practice session.

Official Formula 1 pages are used for dates, session times, circuit data, results, and standings. Pirelli supplies the compound selection. The 27-lap rule is taken from the two published reports listed below; the final event documents remain controlling.

01 Formula 1 / Qatar event and circuit

02 Formula 1 / Qatar full timetable

03 Formula 1 / 2026 drivers' standings

04 Formula 1 / 2026 teams' standings

05 Formula 1 / Las Vegas official race result

06 Formula 1 / Las Vegas team reports, 22 Nov

07 Pirelli / Compounds for the final three races

08 Pitpass / Qatar tyre mileage report, 21 Nov

09 Formula 1 / 2026 racing terminology

10 Formula 1 / Official 2026 Sprint calendar

11 Formula 1 / Antonelli's maiden title

12 RacingNews365 / Qatar 27-lap report, 20 Nov

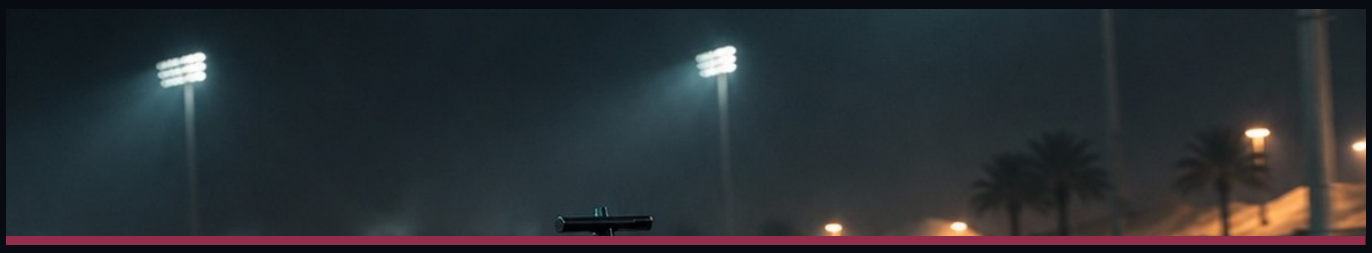
HOW THE ANALYSIS WAS BUILT

Statements about future pace are editorial judgments. Strategy illustrations are labelled and calculated from the reported cap. No private telemetry, fuel loads, betting prices, grid penalties, or weather forecast has been invented. The images are illustrative AI-generated scenes.

INDEPENDENT SPORTS COVERAGE

Disclaimer

A race preview is an informed starting point. It is not a promise about what happens next.



Editorial purpose

This independent Digital World Pulse publication is provided for general sports information and entertainment. It is not affiliated with or endorsed by Formula 1, the FIA, Pirelli, Lusail International Circuit, or any team or driver.

A changing event

Schedules, entries, technical instructions, classifications, and penalties can change after publication. Consult the official event documents and final classifications. A conditional outlook should be reassessed after practice and qualifying.

If you use the analysis for betting

There are no guaranteed outcomes. This guide is not personalised betting or financial advice. Follow the laws and age restrictions where you live, set limits, and do not risk money you cannot afford to lose.

PUBLICATION NOTE

Prepared 23 November 2026. Original analysis, illustrative strategy calculations, and AI-generated artwork. Sources are linked on page 19. Digital World Pulse is responsible for its editorial judgments; the cited organisations are responsible for their own publications.

SOURCES [01] [02]

LINKED INDEX ON PAGE 19