

Beat: Sports

2017 British Grand Prix - Preview

Silverstone

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USPA NEWS - Battle continues with Round 10 of the 2017 season from Silverstone

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Toto Talks Great Britain

The British Grand Prix is one of the highlights of any Formula One season. It's a combination of the history of the circuit, the knowledge and racing culture of the fans, unpredictable weather conditions and, of course, the unique feeling of racing just a few kilometres from our factories.

All of our team-mates who don't normally travel to the races will have the chance to come and see the cars in action on Friday and that is a very special moment of our year. It gives every team member the connection to what we do in the most powerful way.

The entire weekend is like a celebration of motorsport in the UK and of course also a celebration of the driver who is in my view the country's greatest ever F1 talent, Lewis. He enjoys a very special relationship with the fans at Silverstone and has a fantastic record there in recent years.

From the team's perspective, we come to Silverstone with a feeling of unfinished business and needing to put things right, even though we took the win in Austria. In both Baku and Spielberg, we left points on the table that were there for the taking because of car problems that had nothing to do with our drivers. We are determined to make sure that doesn't happen in Silverstone.

The determination for Lewis to fight back with a strong performance this weekend needs no more explanation. Things could have been a lot worse at the last two races "" but his performance and pace deserved a lot better. He has handled the setbacks with the calmness and maturity we have come to expect from him. Lewis is doing the job in a pretty perfect way right now and if he keeps doing that, the results will follow.

Valtteri keeps getting stronger with every race. After the fightback in Baku, he just got on with the job in a cool and collected way in Austria. He knew we needed pole position and the win; he kept his feet on the ground, produced the start of his life and delivered. He's taking it step by step, concentrating on the things in his control that make the difference, and the results speak for themselves.

Silverstone is a circuit that we hope will suit our car. It is a very different challenge to the most recent tracks, with its sweeping corners putting the emphasis on aerodynamic efficiency. It will be an awesome sight to see these 2017 cars defying the laws of physics in the fast corners and we are all excited to see that.

It's clear that as a team, we need to give the drivers the right platform to express their talents "" and that means delivering on our own high standards of performance and reliability. We are absolutely capable of both and we need to turn that capability into points this weekend.

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It's the true test that the 2017 iteration of Formula One has been waiting for. Silverstone "" the high-speed 5.891 km circuit, home to the British Grand Prix "" is where fans will really see what these new beasts can do.

Silverstone was the fastest circuit on the F1 calendar back in the 1980s and, while repeated layout tweaks mean that particular honour now lies with Monza, the historic Northamptonshire track still boasts some of the most spectacular high-speed corners in world

motorsport. Abbey, Copse, Maggots and Becketts, Stowe“¹ this is a circuit where it's easier to count the bends that aren't high-speed. The perfect playground, then, for the current generation of Grand Prix machinery.

Downforce is king at a circuit like this and, thanks to the new-for-2017 aerodynamic regulations, these cars have plenty of it. Already this year, high-speed apexes really have been just that ““ significantly more so than under the previous regulatory era. This weekend at Silverstone looks set to take it to a whole new level, with the highest apex speed seen in 2016 (265 km/h at Copse) expected to rise closer to the 290 km/h mark.

Pole position laps in 2017 have been 5.8 km/h quicker on average than their 2016 equivalents, with the average fastest race lap up 5.5 km/h. Silverstone's average speeds of 238 km/h (qualifying) and 222 km/h (race) are certain to shoot up ““ and it's in those high-speed corners, where this year's cars really flourish, that the rise in speed will be most visible.

The aerodynamic gain granted by the new rules and the stability it delivers is the key to this much-improved high-speed corner performance. Drivers want a car they can believe in underneath them. One they can trust to stay glued to the road. Give them that and they'll push harder on the tyres ““ which, of course, also play an important role ““ as they flirt with the limits of grip, carrying more and more speed as they build in confidence.

Where previously a corner might have been considered a high-speed challenge, it should actually now be more straightforward with the downforce offered by a 2017 Formula One car. In fact, it's the medium-speed corners where fans will see the 2017 beasts really working, with drivers able to carry more speed into the apex and then through the corner than ever before. Stowe, at the end of the Hangar Straight, is going to be scary quick and require full focus.

This year, fans can expect to see the awesome Abbey section flat in qualifying, which has never been done before. It won't quite be easy flat ““ the drivers will scrub some speed off the car with the change of direction ““ but don't expect them to lift. Copse, a magnificent corner anyway, will be exceedingly quick this year (easily flat-chat) and the cars will carry that speed into the fearsome Maggots / Becketts complex, all the way up to Stowe.

Spectacular? Undoubtedly. But it's worth noting that these high-speed corners will put added stress through the car and the tyres. Where Spielberg gave the cars a hammering through shock loading over the vicious kerbs, at Silverstone it's the sustained forces exerted on the chassis and rubber that take their toll. Take a small part ““ like a wheel-bearing, for example. The amount of time that spends under high load and high G is much longer than it would be at a track such as Baku, or Montreal. This all adds to the reliability challenge.

Silverstone's series of high-speed corners will not just be a test of the car and its tyres but also a huge challenge for the men strapped into the cockpit. They'll experience extreme G-Force as they sweep through Silverstone's classic curves ““ glued to the track by nearly 30 per cent more aero-delivered downforce than in 2016. Through the now flat-out Abbey section at the start of the lap, the drivers will exceed 300 km/h, shoulder an average of 4.5G of lateral load (up from 4.2G last year) and briefly peak at 5.5G of lateral load ““ almost double the force experienced by astronauts during a rocket launch!

Silverstone, for all the changes and updates over the years, certainly retains some of its retro edginess. The crowds will be in for a treat as these incredible 2017 machines ““ the fastest of all time ““ blast their way around the thrilling, high-speed ribbon of Northamptonshire airfield. It's set to be quite a spectacle“¹

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