AUTO ACTION'S 2023 PRE
JAPANESE FORMULA ONE
TEAM-BY-TEAM EVENT GUIDE

RED BULL'S PURSUIT OF THE PERFECT SEASON MAY BE OVER, BUT IT CAN STILL SECURE A SPECIAL PIECE OF FORMULA 1 HISTORY AT THE JAPANESE GRAND PRIX.

AFTER 15 straight wins for the team and a record 10 straight for Max Verstappen, Red Bull's golden run came to a sudden end at Singapore.

Strangely the Marina Bay streets proved to be the kryptonite of the RB19, much like it brought Mercedes undone in 2015.

Despite neither Red Bull being on the podium or making Q3, this is tipped to be a one-off as Suzuka's long and fast corners should suit the RB19 and all the talk is whether or not Christian Horner's team can wrap up the constructors championship with six races still to go.

For Red Bull to achieve it at the home of its power unit supplier Honda, it must outscore Mercedes by one point or more, plus not have Ferrari outscore it by 24 points or more.

Red Bull currently enjoys a commanding 308 point lead over Mercedes and 332 over Ferrari.

Last year Verstappen secured his second drivers championship at a very wet Japanese Grand Prix, while the team wrapped up its title at Austin.

The leading contender to stop Red Bull is Ferrari, which has not only taken the fight to the charging bulls but beaten them.

The Scuderia assault has been fronted by Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who is on fire and in arguably career best form.

After some conversations with the team over the summer break, Sainz came out firing, taking two poles, a podium and a special Singapore win.

Although Mercedes and McLaren were also in the mix for victory at Singapore, Ferrari has the better consistency and speed heading into the Japanese Grand Prix.

Whilst the constructors championship itself could be wrapped up, the fight for second is only intensifying with Ferrari just 24 points behind Mercedes.

Looking to throw a cat amongst the pigeons once again is McLaren after returning to the podium via Lando Norris.

But after soaring from 17th to seventh in the old car, all eyes will be on Australia's Oscar Piastri to see what he can do in the upgraded MCL60.

The aggressively re-profiled side pods, plus revised floor and front wing endplate have been suggested to be two to three tenths faster, so Australians could anticipate Piastri to be fighting for more points at the very least.

All eyes will also be on Liam Lawson, who is fresh from his first career points and wants to make another statement amid speculation he may miss out on an AlphaTauri seat to Daniel Ricciardo and Yuki Tsunoda, who is gearing up for his home race.

Unlike last year, sunny skies are predicted for the Japanese Grand Prix, which will even begin during a respectable time of the day.

JAPANESE GRAND PRIX - SEPTEMBER 22-24

THE TRICKY, twisty and fast Suzuka is set to excite. The former Honda test track is a driver's favourite full of famous and challenging corners from the snaking "S" section, the daring Degners, tricky Spoon Curve and the breathtaking 130R. With packed stands full of super passionate fans, a crossover and fressis wheel, it is a track that literally has everything, including a history of championship-deciding moments.

TRACK STATS

OLD QUAL LAP RECORD:
- Sebastian Vettel 1:27.06 Ferrari SF90 2019

OLD RACE LAP RECORD:
- Lewis Hamilton 1:30.983 Mercedes W10 EQ Power+ 2019
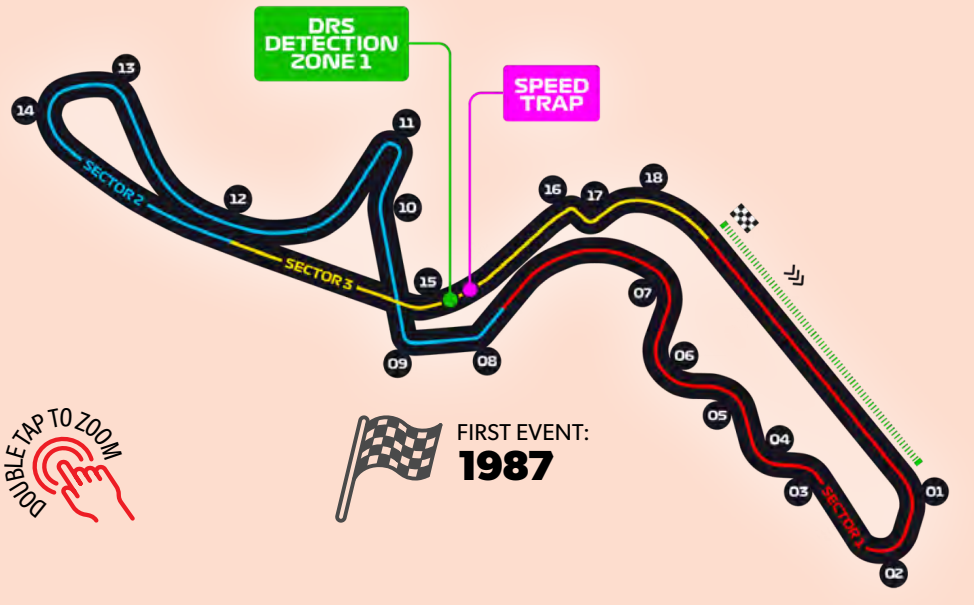
TRACK FACTS

TRACK LENGTH:
5.807KM

DIRECTION:
ANTI-CLOCKWISE

AVERAGE SPEED:
240 KM/H

TOP SPEED:
328 KM/H

DRS DETECTION ZONE 1

SPEED TRAP

DOUBLE TAP TO ZOOM

FIRST EVENT:
1987

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

TIME	SESSION
12.30-13.30	Practice 1
16.00-17.00	Practice 2

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

TIME	SESSION
12.30-13.30	Practice 3
16.00-17.00	Qualifying

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

TIME	SESSION
15.00	Grand Prix

LIST OF RACE RESULTS

2022: Max Verstappen	2013: Sebastian Vettel	2006: Fernando Alonso
2019: Valtteri Bottas	2012: Sebastian Vettel	2005: Kimi Räikkönen
2018: Lewis Hamilton	2011: Jenson Button	2004: Michael Schumacher
2017: Lewis Hamilton	2010: Sebastian Vettel	2003: Rubens Barrichello
2016: Nico Rosberg	2009: Sebastian Vettel	2002: Michael Schumacher
2015: Lewis Hamilton	2008: Fernando Alonso	2001: Michael Schumacher
2014: Lewis Hamilton	2007: Lewis Hamilton	2000: Michael Schumacher

LIST OF POLE POSITIONS

2022: Max Verstappem	2013: Mark Webber	2006: Felipe Massa
2019: Sebastian Vettel	2012: Sebastian Vettel	2005: Ralf Schumacher
2018: Lewis Hamilton	2011: Sebastian Vettel	2004: Michael Schumacher
2017: Lewis Hamilton	2010: Sebastian Vettel	2003: Rubens Barrichello
2016: Nico Rosberg	2009: Sebastian Vettel	2002: Michael Schumacher
2015: Nico Rosberg	2008: Lewis Hamilton	2001: Michael Schumacher
2014: Nico Rosberg	2007: Lewis Hamilton	2000: Michael Schimacher

MOST WINS
6 Michael Schumacher
5 Lewis Hamilton
4 Sebastian Vettel

MOST PODIUMS
9 Michael Schumacher
8 Sebastian Vettel
7 Lewis Hamilton

MOST POLES
8 Michael Schumacher
5 Sebastian Vettel
4 Lewis Hamilton
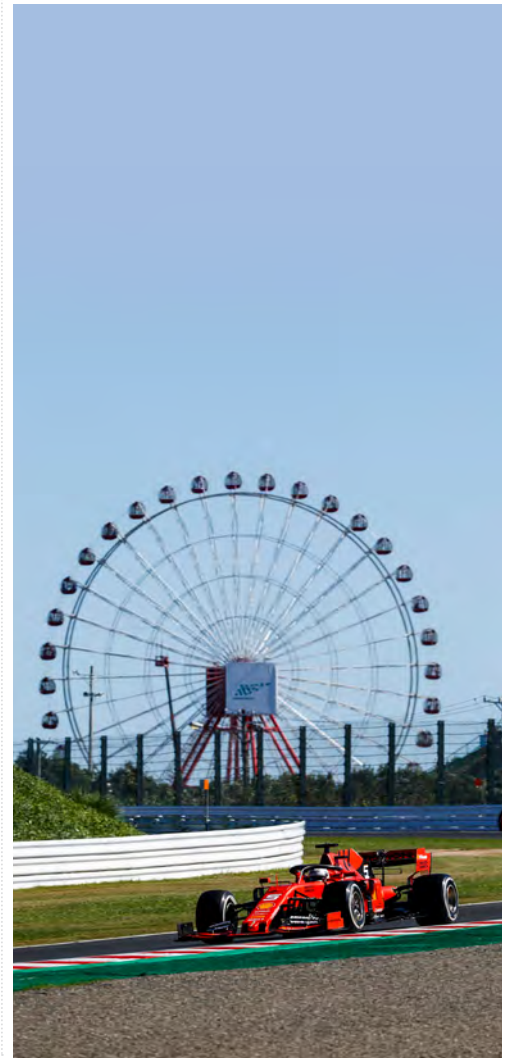
1ST — 374 POINTS — RED BULL — MAX VERSTAPPEN

AGE: 25
DEBUT: Aus 2015
STARTS: 178
BEST QUAL: 1st (x28)
PODIUMS: 91
BEST RESULT: 1st (x47)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 1.4
BEST JAPAN GP: 1st 2022

Car number: 1

TEAM PRINCIPAL CHRISTIAN HORNER

Max Verstappen will have a strange feeling in Suzuka having not won the previous Grand Prix for the first time in 10 races. For the first time in 2023 Verstappen was absent from the podium in Singapore in a rare off weekend for him and Red Bull. Was crowned world champion in weird circumstances at a wet Suzuka last year.

2ND — 223 POINTS — RED BULL — SERGIO PEREZ

AGE: 33
DEBUT: Aus 2011
STARTS: 250
BEST QUAL: 1st (x3)
PODIUMS: 34
BEST RESULT: 1st (x6)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 4.33
BEST JAPAN GP: 2nd 2022

Car number: 11
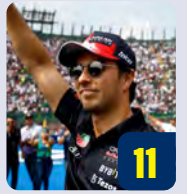
TEAM PRINCIPAL CHRISTIAN HORNER

Not only did Verstappen have a tough weekend in Singapore, so did Sergio Perez, who could only qualify 13th and finish eighth. It was a far cry from 12 months ago when Perez drove to a strong win. Finished a distant second behind Verstappen last year after starting fourth, but that is his only Japanese top five.

4TH — 180 POINTS — MERCEDES — LEWIS HAMILTON

AGE: 38
DEBUT: Aus 2007
STARTS: 325
BEST QUAL: 1st (x104)
PODIUMS: 196
BEST RESULT: 1st (x103)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 4.47
BEST JAPAN GP: 1st 07,14,15,17,18

Car number: 44

TEAM PRINCIPAL TOTO WOLFF

Lewis Hamilton finally snatched third in the championship from Alonso with a patient podium in Singapore. Despite a controversial off on the opening lap, Hamilton put in a solid drive and was rewarded with a late charge on the mediums when Russell crashed, and promoted him to the podium. Last year was the first time he missed the Suzuka podium since 2013.

3RD — 170 POINTS — ASTON MARTIN — FERNANDO ALONSO

AGE: 41
DEBUT: Aus 2001
STARTS: 370
BEST QUAL: 1st (x22)
PODIUMS: 105
BEST RESULT: 1st (x32)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 4.23
BEST JAPAN GP: 1st 06,08

Car number: 14

TEAM PRINCIPAL MIKE KRACK

Fernando Alonso needs to bounce back after a "race to forget" in Singapore. Despite being the first driver to clock 100,000 racing kilometres, there was no celebrating as Alonso was penalised for crossing the white line at pit entry, before suffering a slow pit stop and going off which left him 15th and losing third place to Hamilton. Last year was his first points finish at Suzuka since 2013.

5TH — 142 POINTS — FERRARI — CARLOS SAINZ JR

AGE: 28
DEBUT: Aus 2015
STARTS: 177
BEST QUAL: 1st (x5)
PODIUMS: 17
BEST RESULT: 1st (x2)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 5.93
BEST JAPAN GP: 5th 2019

Car number: 55

TEAM PRINCIPAL FRED VASSEUR

Verstappen aside, Carlos Sainz is the most inform driver on the F1 grid having backed up his memorable Monza podium with an even better drive in Singapore. Sainz perfectly managed a tense race to claim a lights to flag win. His second for Ferrari. Aims to continue his momentum and bounce back from his big first-lap Japanese GP crash from last year.

6TH — 123 POINTS — FERRARI — CHARLES LECLERC

AGE: 25
DEBUT: Aus 2018
STARTS: 117
BEST QUAL: 1st (x19)
PODIUMS: 27
BEST RESULT: 1st (x5)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 5.58
BEST JAPAN GP: 3rd 2022

Car number: 16
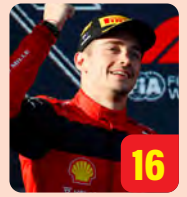
TEAM PRINCIPAL FRED VASSEUR

Whilst Ferrari is a renewed force, it has not been Charles Leclerc who has been leading the charge. Leclerc would hope to re-estbalish himself as team leader after finishing fourth despite running as high as second in Singapore. Battled for the lead with Verstappen at Japan last year but ended up third from a penalty following a last-lap battle with Perez.

7TH — 109 POINTS — MERCEDES — GEORGE RUSSELL

AGE: 25
DEBUT: Aus 2019
STARTS: 97
BEST QUAL: 1st (x2)
PODIUMS: 10
BEST RESULT: 1st (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 7.15
BEST JAPAN GP: 8th 2022

Car number: 63

TEAM PRINCIPAL TOTO WOLFF

George Russell left Singapore on the verge of tears after a "heartbreaking" last-lap crash. Russell sat an impressive third, only to tag the barriers on entry to the old Singapore Sling and crash out. It was a bitter blow for Russell with only one podium all year. Started eighth and finished eighth in the wet last year.

8TH — 97 POINTS — MCLAREN — LANDO NORRIS

AGE: 23
DEBUT: Aus 2019
STARTS: 97
BEST QUAL: 1st (x1)
PODIUMS: 9
BEST RESULT: 2nd (x3)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 9.13
BEST JAPAN GP: 10th 2022

Car number: 4
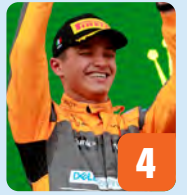
TEAM PRINCIPAL ZAC BROWN

McLaren's super Singapore GP was fronted by Lando Norris, who delivered McLaren a third podium in six races. Norris started fourth and jumped to second during the late VSC and managed to fend off the charging Mercedes. Only just held onto points in Japan 2022 and finished 11th on Suzuka debut in 2019.

9TH — 47 POINTS — ASTON MARTIN — LANCE STROLL

AGE: 24
DEBUT: Aus 2017
STARTS: 136
BEST QUAL: 1st (x1)
PODIUMS: 3
BEST RESULT: 3rd (x3)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 8.82
BEST JAPAN GP: 9th 2018

Car number: 18

TEAM PRINCIPAL MIKE KRACK

Lance Stroll will be fit to race at Suzuka after missing Singapore following a sickening smash. Stroll sat out of the Singapore GP after feeling "sore" from a high-speed crash at the final corner at the end of Q1 which destroyed his AMR23. Has scored points once from his four Japanese GPs.

12TH — 45 POINTS — ALPINE — PIERRE GASLY

AGE: 27
DEBUT: Mal 2017
STARTS: 123
BEST QUAL: 2nd (x1)
PODIUMS: 4
BEST RESULT: 1st (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 10.36
BEST JAPAN GP: 7th 2019

Car number: 10
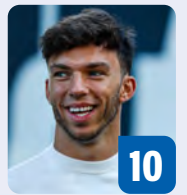
TEAM PRINCIPAL BRUNO FAMIN

Pierre Gasly will be out to defend 10th place from Oscar Piastri in the championship. Gasly gave Alpine some much-needed points in Singapore with a strong sixth, his second best result of the year. Was the last classified finisher at Japan last year after sustaining heavy front end damage in the near invisible conditions at the start.

11TH — 42 POINTS

MCLAREN — OSCAR PIASTRI

AGE: 21
DEBUT: Bah 2023
STARTS: 15
BEST QUAL: 3rd (x1)
PODIUMS: 0
BEST RESULT: 4th (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 10.77
**BEST SING GP:** N/A

81

TEAM PRINCIPAL ZAC BROWN

Fresh from the thrill of singing a new long term deal with McLaren, Oscar Piastri has big things in mind at Japan.Piastri will receive the fully upgraded MCL60 which Norris got a podium with. Impressed with the old car by flying from 17th to seventh in Singapore. Primed for first crack at Suzuka.

10TH — 36 POINTS

ALPINE — ESTEBAN OCON

AGE: 27
DEBUT: Bel 2016
STARTS: 126
BEST QUAL: 3rd (x2)
PODIUMS: 3
BEST RESULT: 1st (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 9.7
BEST JAPAN GP: 4th 2022

31
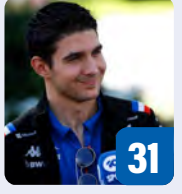
TEAM PRINCIPAL BRUNO FAMIN

Esteban Ocon hopes to regain the points he lost in Singapore where he retired from sixth with gearbox issues. It was a bitter 27th Birthday present for Ocon who has also lost a spot to Piastri in the championship. Can turn to Japan last year for inspiration where scored fourth in the wet.

13TH — 21 POINTS

WILLIAMS — ALEX ALBON

AGE: 27
DEBUT: Aus 2019
STARTS: 74
BEST QUAL: 4th (x5)
PODIUMS: 3
BEST RESULT: 3rd (x2)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 11.36
BEST JAPAN GP: 4th 2019

**23**

TEAM PRINCIPAL JAMES VOWLES

There was a feeling of what might have been for Alex Albon in Singapore after hopes of a third straight points finish were taken out by Perez. Albon needed just 18 laps to climb from 15th to eighth and was on track for points until an "optimistic" move from Perez took him out. Finished a strong fourth in his Red Bull days at Suzuka in 2019 and retired last year.

14TH — 9 POINTS

HAAS — NICO HULKENBERG

AGE: 35
DEBUT: Bah 2010
STARTS: 196
BEST QUAL: 1st (x1)
PODIUMS: 0
BEST RESULT: 4th (x3)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 14.17
BEST JAPAN GP: 6th 13,15

27
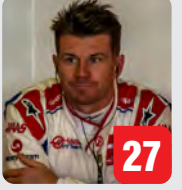
TEAM PRINCIPAL GUENTHER STEINER

Despite returning to Q3, Nico Hulkenberg could not get points in Singapore. He ended up 13th after double stacking behind Magnussen and encountering brake dramas mid race. However, there are still plenty of positives to take to Japan for the German.

15TH — 6 POINTS

ALFA ROMEO SAUBER — VALTTERI BOTTAS

AGE: 33
DEBUT: Aus 2013
STARTS: 215
BEST QUAL: 1 (x20)
PODIUMS: 67
BEST RESULT: 1st (x10)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 13.31
BEST JAPAN GP: 1st 2019

77

TEAM PRINCIPAL ALESSANDRO ALUNNI BRAVI

Alfa Romeo rolled the dice with Valtteri Bottas, but it was "not our day" for the Finn who failed to finish. Bottas started on hards hoping for a late Safety Car, but a technical issue brought his race to an end. Enjoyed Japan in his Mercedes days never finishing outside of the top five.

16TH — 4 POINTS

ALFA ROMEO SAUBER — ZHOU GUANYU

AGE: 23
DEBUT: Bah 2022
STARTS: 37
BEST QUAL: 9th (x2)
PODIUMS: 0
BEST RESULT: 8th (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 13.45
BEST JAPAN GP: 16th 2022

24

TEAM PRINCIPAL ALESSANDRO ALUNNI BRAVI

Zhou Guanyu managed 12th with the upgraded Alfa Romeo in Singapore. Had a long stint on the mediums before switching to softs at the VSC and actually lost time. Zhou believes the team will be more competitive going forward. Had a spin en route to 16th in 2022.

17TH — 3 POINTS

ALPHATAURI — YUKI TSUNODA

AGE: 23
DEBUT: Bah 2021
STARTS: 56
BEST QUAL: 7th (x2)
PODIUMS: 0
BEST RESULT: 4th (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 12.53
BEST JAPAN GP: 13th 2022

22

TEAM PRINCIPAL FRANZ TOST

Yuki Tsunoda will be hoping for a change in luck on home turf in Japan. An engine issue and then damage from Perez contact in Singapore has meant Tsunoda has not completed a racing lap in the last two GPs. The boy from Kanagawa needs some inspiration with Lawson performing and speculation surrounding 2024.

18TH — 3 POINTS

HAAS — KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

AGE: 30
DEBUT: Aus 2014
STARTS: 155
BEST QUAL: 1st (x1)
PODIUMS: 1
BEST RESULT: 2nd (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 15.07
BEST JAPAN GP: 8th 2017

20

TEAM PRINCIPAL GUENTHER STEINER

Kevin Magnussen has a spring in his step after his first points in 11 races at Singapore. Haas had improved speed and Magnussen qualified an impressive sixth. But he needed "fight" to cling onto the solitary point. His one and only Japanese GP points appearance arrived in 2017.

19TH — 2 POINTS

ALPHATAURI — LIAM LAWSON

AGE: 21
DEBUT: Dutch 2023
STARTS: 3
BEST QUAL: 10th (x1)
PODIUMS: 0
BEST RESULT: 9th (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 11
BEST JAPAN GP: N/A

40

TEAM PRINCIPAL FRANZ TOST

Flying Kiwi Liam Lawson finds himself on familiar turf as a major discussion point in the F1 world. Lawson stunned in Singapore, beating both Red Bulls in qualifying before staying out of trouble to get maiden points in ninth. Has been racing Japanese SuperFormula all year and sits second ahead of Suzuka finale, but may be a bit busy as he aims to prove a point to AlphaTauri.

20TH — 0 POINTS

WILLIAMS — LOGAN SARGEANT

AGE 22
DEBUT: Bah 2023
STARTS: 15
BEST QUAL: 14th (x1)
PODIUMS: 0
BEST RESULT: 11th (x1)
AVG 2023 FINISH: 16.09
BEST JAPAN GP: N/A

2
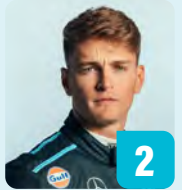
TEAM PRINCIPAL JAMES VOWLES

Logan Sargeant threw away hopes of a strong Singapore result by crashing into he wall at turn eight. Sargeant made a "very costly mistake" and lost a front wing, but made it back to the pits to finish 14th. Hopes to have a clean weekend and made an impact on his first trip to Suzuka.