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Is 2026 the Worst Season of Verstappen's Career?

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Max Verstappen is still looking for his first Formula 1 victory of the year. With eight rounds left at the time of writing, anyone studying the **F1 odds** has a fair question to answer. Is this just a bad year for Red Bull, or the worst season Verstappen has had since his debut campaign at Toro Rosso? The answer depends on which numbers you trust.

A season without a win

Verstappen has not won a Grand Prix since Abu Dhabi in December 2025. The 15 races since then are Red Bull's longest winless run since he joined the team in 2016. If the run lasts until Abu Dhabi on 6 December, this will be his first season without a win since 2015.

The standings tell the same story. At the time of writing, he is sixth on 163 points, 139 behind Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli. Only once since his rookie year has he finished a season that low, in 2017.

The new Red Bull Ford power unit has cost him repeatedly. He retired with an engine problem in China. At Monaco he qualified on the front row, then a power unit problem ended his race on the opening lap. He also crashed on lap 48 at Silverstone, where he was classified 20th, and on the first lap at Zandvoort.

After an engine fault left him eighth on the grid in Baku, he called the power unit "too fragile at times". Back in March, after finishing eighth in Japan, he told the BBC he was considering retirement at the end of the season, blaming the new regulations rather than the car.

How it compares with 2017

The obvious comparison is 2017, his first full season at Red Bull. He finished sixth on 168 points and retired from seven of 20 races, including four in five Grands Prix between Spain and Austria.

He still won twice that year, at Sepang and in Mexico. Here is how the first 15 rounds of each season compare.

After 15 rounds	2017	2026
Wins	1	0
Podiums	2	7
Retirements	7	3
Points	93	163

Some of that gap comes from sprint races, which did not exist in 2017. He has scored 12 points in sprints this year. Take those away and his 151 Grand Prix points are still well clear of his 2017 total at the same stage.

The case against

He has seven podiums, already more than the four he managed across the whole of 2017. Four are second places, the latest two in Madrid and Baku. He has finished on the podium at each of the last three rounds.

He has also comfortably beaten the other Red Bull. Isack Hadjar has 86 points, although he missed three rounds with a wrist injury.

Even the drought is not his longest. Between his first win, at the 2016 Spanish Grand Prix, and his next one, at Sepang in 2017, he went 30 races without a victory. The current run is half that length.

The verdict

On wins, 2026 is his worst season since 2015 unless he wins one of the last eight races. On podiums and points, 2017 was worse, and he still finished sixth that year. Most of the damage this season has come from the car rather than the driver.

Red Bull have kept faith in him. He signed a new contract in August that keeps him at the team until the end of 2030.

His next chance comes at the Bahrain Grand Prix, moved to Sepang because of the Iran war, on 4 October. Formula One last raced there in 2017, and Verstappen won. That gives anyone looking to **bet** on him to end the drought something to go on.

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