



Russell shines under Friday night lights

Mercedes 'Super Sub' sets blistering pace in both F1 practices at BIC to kick off Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix 2020



George Russell gets ready for action in his Mercedes car

● **Russell clocks sub-55 second times to top both practice timesheets**

● **Red Bull's Max Verstappen second in both 90-minute sessions held around BIC's 3.543km Outer Track**

● **Ferrari's Charles Leclerc suffers power trouble in practice two, fails to set a time**

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Formula 1's George Russell, who is driving in place of seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton in this weekend's F1 Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix 2020, is making the most of his dream opportunity to compete with constructors' titlists Mercedes.

The "Super Sub" shone bright-

est last night at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), going fastest in both of the weekend's 90-minute F1 practices.

Russell showed his limitless potential on his debut drive in championship-winning machinery. He powered to a best lap time of 54.713 seconds in practice two, going 0.128s quicker than top rival Max Verstappen of Red Bull Racing while completing 48 laps around BIC's 3.543-kilometre Outer Track.

Russell's second practice time was just under two-tenths of a second off his leading mark of 54.546s from the first practice.

Racing Point's Sergio Perez placed third on the session's timesheet 0.153s off Russell's pace, while Renault's Esteban Ocon (+0.227s) followed in fourth, Alexander Albon (+0.323s) in the other Red Bull car in fifth, and Daniil Kvyat (+0.355s) for AlphaTauri sixth.

Racing Point's Lance Stroll (+0.391s) and Renault's Daniel Ricciardo (+0.411s) completed the top eight.

The rest of the classifica-

tion from ninth to 20th in the second practice: Pierre Gasly of AlphaTauri, Carlos Sainz of McLaren, Valtteri Bottas in the other Mercedes, Kimi Raikkonen and Antonio Giovinazzi for Alfa Romeo, Kevin Magnussen of Haas, Nicholas Latifi for Williams, Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari, Lando Norris in the other McLaren, Pietro Fittipaldi who is driving for Romain Grosjean at Haas, Jack Aitken who is in place of Russel at Williams, and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who had power trouble in the second session and failed to register a time.

The F1 field is now headed to a third practice session today, to be held over 60 minutes, starting



Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc in the BIC Paddock last night

at 5pm. Qualifying will then follow at 8pm, setting the stage for tomorrow's 87-lap race.

Earlier yesterday, Russell was not only quick to adapt to his car but was also able to familiarise himself immediately with the all-new track layout at BIC.

He outpaced both Verstappen and Albon, as well as Bottas, who were second through fourth in the first practice. Verstappen had a best lap 0.176s slower, while Albon was 0.265s off the pace and Bottas 0.322s behind.

The top 10 also included Kvyat and Gasly in fifth and sixth, Ocon in seventh, Vettel eighth, Ricciardo ninth and Leclerc 10th.

The Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix

Today's schedule		
Time	Series	Session
2pm	Porsche Sprint Challenge ME	Qualifying
2.05pm	Formula 1	Team Pit Stop Practice
3.10pm	Formula 2	First Race (48 laps or 60mins)
4.30pm	Formula 2	Press Conference
4.46pm	-Sunset-	
5pm	Formula 1	Third Practice
6.30pm	Porsche Sprint Challenge ME	First Race (17 laps or 25mins)
8pm	Formula 1	Qualifying
9pm	Formula 1	Press Conference
8pm	Formula 1	Qualifying
9pm	Formula 1	Press Conference

is the second event of the Kingdom's first-ever F1 double-head-

er. It is the 16th and penultimate round of the 2020 season.

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The new track layout is very different to the usual layout here and it's not an easy track to say the least. It's going to be very tight in qualifying and we can probably expect a dramatic race. It's been good to be working with the team today and I'm learning a lot every single lap I'm in the car

GEORGE RUSSELL



Sparks fly from the back of the Red Bull Racing challenger of Max Verstappen

What to expect in today's Rolex Sakhir GP qualifying
- With 20 cars vying for clear track, Q1 is expected to be chaotic. There will be two kilometres less circuit (compared to BIC's GP track for the Bahrain Grand Prix) for drivers to space themselves out in.
- With a clean lap requiring a window of around five to seven seconds between each car, there could be some traffic jams at the final corner.
- The drivers may go out on track at different times because of this, in order to make the most of quiet windows in the sessions.



One of the Bell Racing helmets with the campaign logo

Bell honours Bahrain's heroes with special logo on F1, F2 drivers' helmets

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Sakhir-headquartered Bell Racing is supporting the "#ThankYou_OurHeroes" campaign by applying a special logo on the helmets of most of its drivers involved in the Formula One Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix.

The Sakhir Grand Prix will be recognising the Kingdom's frontline health workers, first responders and their immedi-

ate family members, who have been invited to attend the race by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

That's why Bell Racing, world-leading company in the design and production of auto-sport helmets, whose headquarters are at the Bahrain International Circuit, has decided to pay homage to these heroes for their

tireless efforts and sacrifices in Bahrain's national response to COVID-19.

Bell is therefore supporting the "#ThankYou_OurHeroes" campaign by temporarily substituting its traditional logo with a new version that merges the white oval and red writing with the "#ThankYou_OurHeroes" official logo.

The initiative involves most of the F1 and F2 drivers who use a

Bell helmet. Bell Racing CEO Stephane Cohen commented: "We are extremely grateful for the priceless work of frontline health workers and first responders in delivering Bahrain's national response to COVID-19. The least we can do is to support enthusiastically the '#ThankYou_OurHeroes' campaign and offer our symbolic but heartfelt reward to these great people."