

# Revived Hamilton leads Ferrari one-two in Monaco practice

Ferrari and Red Bull emerge as leading contenders before crucial qualifying

● Verstappen placed third fastest

● Mercedes pair close behind

● Norris suffer battery failure

AFP | Monaco

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton rolled back the years yesterday when he outpaced Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc to clock the fastest time in second practice for Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix.

The 41-year-old Briton, a three-time winner at the unforgiving Mediterranean street circuit and chasing his third pole at the event, clocked a best lap in one minute and 13.026 seconds to beat the local hero by 0.111 seconds.

After his strong second-place finish at the Canadian Grand Prix, this was proof that Hamilton has rediscovered his mojo and will seek a record-enhancing 105th pole position and 106th win this weekend.

He won in Monaco in 2008, 2016 and 2019 and is one of six former winners in the field.

Four-time champion Max Verstappen was third fastest for Red Bull, 0.168 adrift, ahead of the Mercedes of George Russell and championship-leading Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli, three-tenths and five-tenths off



Ferrari's British driver Lewis Hamilton takes part in the second practice session

the pace.

Hamilton will also seek an eighth Monaco podium on Sunday to draw level with Ayrton Senna's record of eight.

Isack Hadjar recovered from a crash during opening practice to finish sixth in the second Red Bull ahead of Oscar Piastri of McLaren, whose team-mate world champion Lando Norris suffered battery failure and

## 105th

pole position will be achieved by Lewis Hamilton if he tops Saturday's qualifying session

wound up down in 19th place.

The two Audis of Nico Hulkenberg and Gabriel Bortoleto were eighth and ninth ahead of Oliver Bearman of Haas while it was another dismal day for Aston Martin with two-time champion Fernando Alonso 20th and Lance Stroll 22nd.

The session began with Hadjar's car still up on axle stands, as Russell led the way, under a

blue sky with a mild 22 degrees Celsius. Verstappen set an early time before the Ferraris took over with Leclerc in front by a whisker ahead of Hamilton until Verstappen took over.

Everyone, bar the Aston Martins on softs, ran on mediums as the track ramped up, providing more grip and faster lap times as Hamilton proved by going top in 1:13.729, 0.279 clear of Ver-

stappen.

Hadjar joined the fray after 14 minutes. "Thank you, guys," he said as he pulled out shortly before a Virtual Safety Car (VSC) was deployed briefly when Norris pulled up at the Nouvelle Chicane with a battery-related electrical failure.

On resumption, Leclerc regained control, edging Hamilton by 0.058 seconds in 1:13.613 before Verstappen took softs and clocked 1:13.467. Both Mercedes men also took softs, too, but were unable to catch the top trio until Russell rose to second.

Ferrari finally took to softs with 26 minutes to go, Leclerc soon clocking 1:13.137 to take command by 0.057 before Hamilton, clearly in the mood, trimmed that in 1:13.026.

In the final minutes, Sergio Perez came to a halt in Casino Square in his Cadillac, the American marque racing in Europe for the first time, with smoke filling his cockpit from the front-right brake ducts.



Hamilton can equal Ayrton Senna's Monaco podium record of eight if he finishes in the top three on Sunday

## FIFA ups payments to clubs who send players to World Cup

AFP | Lausanne

Clubs whose players go to the World Cup, or appeared in qualifying, will receive increased compensation this summer, FIFA, the governing body of world football, announced yesterday.

FIFA said it had increased the amount of money in its Club Benefits Programme to \$355 million (306m euros). It had already announced last September that it planned this increase of 70 percent from the amount distributed for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

While FIFA does not give total revenue figures for the World Cup, it estimates that its total revenue this year will be 56 percent up on 2022, and for the four years to 2026, a period which includes an enlarged Club World Cup in 2025, it will have taken in 72 per cent more than in the previous cycle.

On the other hand, this World Cup is bigger. The field is increased from 36 teams to 48, the number of matches will rise from 64 to 104 and the competition will stretch over 39 days, against 29 last time.

Furthermore, clubs will be compensated for appearances in World Cup qualifying for the



A view of the World Cup trophy

first time.

The total fund is divided into three parts.

A total of \$250 million is reserved for compensation for players at the finals. FIFA calculated that the minimum payment per player will be \$5,000 per day spent at the World Cup, "although the final figures will be confirmed after the conclusion of the tournament".

These payments, FIFA said, "will be calculated on a per-player, per-day basis, taking into account both squad inclusion and

the duration of each player's involvement".

Another \$100 million is earmarked for qualifiers.

FIFA calculates it will pay \$2,362 for each player in a match-day squad for the 905 qualifying games and for 10 friendlies for each of the three host nations, which did not need to qualify.

The remaining \$5 million will pay administrative costs with any balance "allocated to the benefit of global club football".

"This is another benefit from

the expanded FIFA World Cup - providing more support across the entire football ecosystem to the clubs that provide all the players who compete to shine on the global stage," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino in the press release explaining the programme.

The payments are based on a player's club registration when squads are announced but there are provisions for players who switch clubs during the tournament and for replacement players.

## Man City chairman will 'say everything' after verdict on financial charges

AFP | London

Manchester City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak plans to "say everything" about the club's battle with Premier League chiefs once a verdict on their financial charges has been delivered.

City were charged with 115 alleged breaches of the Premier League's financial rules in 2023.

The alleged offences covered a nine-year period from 2009 until 2018.

City were also charged with failing to cooperate with the Premier League's investigation into their finances.

The case is yet to reach a conclusion, despite an independent commission hearing taking place a year and a half ago.

City have denied any wrongdoing and, as the wait goes on to discover if they have been cleared or found guilty, Khaldoon is looking forward to eventually telling his club's side of the story.

"Let me be as consistent as



Khaldoon Al Mubarak

"I've always been -- until we have a ruling, I can't say much," Khaldoon told the club's media channels.

"Once we have a ruling, believe me, we're going to have a wonderful sit down together and I'll say everything I've wanted to say for the last three years."

City have enjoyed sustained success since the 2008 takeover by their Abu Dhabi-based owners, winning eight Premier League titles, the Champions League, four FA Cups and seven League Cups.

The club's valuation has soared in that time and Khaldoon said owner Sheikh Mansour has no intention of selling the City Football Group, which he values at around \$10 billion.