



# Bottas grabs Sakhir GP pole!

Mercedes lock out front row for tonight's all-new Formula 1 spectacle after intense qualifying along BIC Outer Track

● **Bottas outpaces Russell by just 0.026s, while Verstappen just 0.026s behind**

● **Racing Point, AlphaTauri join Mercedes as only teams with both cars in top 10**

● **F1 Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix scheduled for 8.10pm start**

TDT | Manama



Bottas charges to pole during qualifying last night

Valtteri Bottas was the last man standing in one of the most intriguing and unpredictable Formula 1 qualifying sessions of the season last night in the Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC).

Bottas captured pole with a blistering lap of 53.377 seconds in Q3, beating out teammate George Russell—driving in place of Lewis Hamilton this weekend—by just 0.026 seconds to lock out the front row for Mercedes for the second successive weekend.

Bottas commented after qualifying: "It's great to be on pole, I'm happy with that, but this wasn't my best qualifying. My second run in Q3 was decent, but I think there was still a bit of time missing in Turn 7 and 8. I was the first car out on track on the final run, so I didn't have a tow and ultimately couldn't improve. It was fairly close in the end, so I'm pleased it was enough for pole position."

"It's great to see George in P2 and that we managed to lock out the front row for the team. I'm not really surprised to see him up there, he kept improving

throughout the weekend and particularly through qualifying.

"The track is quite bumpy and it's actually fairly easy to follow other cars thanks to the tow, but we're in the best possible position for tomorrow and are looking forward to a fun race."

Qualifying behind them were Max Verstappen (+0.056s) of Red Bull Racing and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc (+0.236s), while Sergio Perez (+0.413s) of Racing Point and Daniil Kvyat (+0.529s) of AlphaTauri secured the grid positions on row three.

Completing the front 10 will be Renault's Daniel Ricciardo (+0.580s), McLaren's Carlos Sainz (+0.633s), Pierre Gasly (+0.777s) in the second AlphaTauri, and Lance Stroll (+0.823s) in the other Racing Point car.

Verstappen had earlier led the field after Q2 while Bottas was the top man at the end of Q1, both already with sub-54 second times.

Q2 saw some disappointing exits for some after starting off the weekend with promising performances. Renault's Este-



**With last night's qualifying results, Valtteri Bottas claimed his fifth pole position of the 2020 season. He will be going for his third win of the year, and first in Bahrain**

ban Ocon, Red Bull's Alexander Albon, Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel, Alfa Romeo's Antonio Giovinazzi and McLaren's Lando Norris all had their qualifying campaigns end there and will begin today's race from 11th to 15th, respectively.

Eliminated from further contention in Q1 were Kevin Magnussen of Haas, Nicholas Latifi and Jack Aitken of Williams,

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VALTTERI BOTTAS

Kimi Raikkonen in the other Alfa Romeo, and Pietro Fittipaldi in the second Haas car. They complete the start grid from 16th to 20th.

Aitken is driving in place of Russell this weekend while Fittipaldi is subbing for Romain Grosjean as he continues to recover from his crash at last weekend's F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix.

Earlier yesterday evening, Verstappen stormed to the top of the timesheet in the third F1 practice, clocking a fastest lap of 54.064secs—the best time of the meeting at that time. Verstappen completed 23 laps in the 60-minute session and finished 0.206s quicker than Bottas. Gasly was third fastest 0.363s off Verstappen's pace, while Ocon placed fourth 0.389s behind.

The rest of the top 10 included Norris, Albon, Russell, Perez, Stroll and Sainz, while rom 11th to 20th were Giovinazzi, Kvyat, Leclerc, Ricciardo, Vettel, Raikkonen, Magnussen, Latifi, Fittipaldi and Aitken.

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Verstappen completed 23 laps



Russell gives a thumbs up after last night's qualifying

### Today's schedule

Time	Series	Session
3.20pm	Formula 2	Second Race (34 laps or 45mins)
4.20pm	Formula 2	Press Conference
4.30pm	Porsche Challenge ME	Second Race (17 laps or 25mins)
6.20pm	Formula 1	Drivers' Presentation
7.53pm	Formula 1	End Racism Recognition
7.54pm	Formula 1	National Anthem
8.10pm	Formula 1	Rolex Sakhir GP (87 laps or 120mins)

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Today's F1 Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix is the second race of Bahrain's first-ever F1 double-header. It is the penultimate round of the 2020 F1 season.

### Drivers' Comments

"I've got nobody in front of me tomorrow, which I've not experienced for a long time. It's going to be a really tricky race on such a short track layout, but we're in a good position. I'll give it my all and see what I can do."

**George Russell, Mercedes**

"I'm a little bit frustrated with the result because I definitely felt the car could have finished inside the top five. Despite the frustrations, I do think we can make some moves tomorrow and get some decent points from both cars."

**Daniel Ricciardo, Renault**

"It's not the result we were expecting after looking not too bad in FP3. We were just struggling in a few places and ended up being too slow to make the cut. It's going to be a challenge tomorrow, it's not easy to overtake around there, so let's see what we can do when the race starts."

**Kimi Raikkonen, Alfa Romeo**

"I'm happy with qualifying today; I think it was a strong result. I don't think P4 was possible because it was a good lap from Charles [Leclerc] and it would have been difficult to match that. It's not been an easy challenge finding the perfect set-up for the car at such a different and challenging track, but I think we found a rhythm in qualifying and that was a big positive."

**Sergio Perez, Racing Point**

### Sakhir Grand Prix starting order, qualifying results

1	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes	Q3: 53.377s
2	George Russell	Mercedes	Q3: 53.403s
3	Max Verstappen	Red Bull Racing	Q3: 53.433s
4	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	Q3: 53.613s
5	Sergio Perez	Racing Point	Q3: 53.790s
6	Daniil Kvyat	AlphaTauri	Q3: 53.906s
7	Daniel Ricciardo	Renault	Q3: 53.957s
8	Carlos Sainz	McLaren	Q3: 54.010s
9	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri	Q3: 54.154s
10	Lance Stroll	Racing Point	Q3: 54.200s
11	Esteban Ocon	Renault	Q2: 53.995s
12	Alexander Albon	Red Bull Racing	Q2: 54.026s
13	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari	Q2: 54.175s
14	Antonio Giovinazzi	Alfa Romeo	Q2: 54.377s
15	Lando Norris	McLaren	Q2: 54.693s
16	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	Q1: 54.705s
17	Nicholas Latifi	Williams	Q1: 54.796s
18	Jack Aitken	Williams	Q1: 54.892s
19	Kimi Raikkonen	Alfa Romeo	Q1: 54.963s
20	Pietro Fittipaldi	Haas	Q1: 55.426s



McLaren's Carlos Sainz gets into the cockpit of his car for qualifying



Verstappen in action during qualifying at BIC