

# Speed and Glory at NBB Cups

TDT | Manama

In the presence of His Highness Shaikh Faisal bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Vice President of the Supreme Council for Environment, Deputy Chairman of the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club's (REHC) High Committee, and Member of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, the REHC held today the seventh race of the 2025-2026 season at its racecourse in Al Raffah, Sakhir, over the National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) Cups.

The eight-round race saw the attendance of a number of Their Highnesses and Excellencies, as well as representatives of NBB, the official sponsor of the race. In addition, a large audience of equestrian sports enthusiasts enjoyed strong races featuring exciting results and surprises, along with the entertaining activities and diverse events that distinguish the Club's weekly horseracing meetings.

Winners of the NBB Cups were announced, and His Highness Shaikh Sultan Al Deen bin Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa received the third-round trophy from Mr. Usman Ahmed, Group CEO of NBB; the fifth-round tro-



Usman Ahmed, second from left, Group CEO of NBB, pictured at the NBB Cups event.



phy from Mr. Isa Maseeh, Board Member at NBB; and the sixth-round trophy from Mr. Ahmed Al Maskati, Head of Product Development and Project Management at NBB.

His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Mohammed Al Khalifa received the seventh-round trophy from Mr. Abdulla bin Hindi, Senior Manager of Strategic Accounts at NBB, while Mr. Yusuf Ahmed, Head of Prestige Banking, presented the eighth-round

trophy to Nadia Al Alawi.

Meanwhile, Mr. Abdulaziz Al Ahmed, CEO for Strategic Accounts, presented the first-round trophy to the winning trainer Yousif Taher, Mr. Isa Maseeh presented the second-round trophy to the assistant trainer Ishaq Murad, and Mr. Ali Abdulkarim, Group Chief Executive of Corporate and Commercial Banking, presented the fourth-round trophy to the winning owner Hadi Al Afoo.

# Norris tops crucial Abu Dhabi practice

Championship leader sets the pace in second practice at the Yas Marina Circuit

● **Lando Norris leads Max Verstappen by 0.363 seconds**

● **Oscar Piastri struggles, finishes 11th**

● **George Russell third for Mercedes**

AFP | Abu Dhabi

Series leader Lando Norris completed a 'double top' to boost his bid for a maiden drivers' world championship ahead of title rival Max Verstappen in yesterday's twilight second practice for this weekend's decisive season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

The 26-year-old Briton clocked a best lap in one minute and 23.083 seconds in his McLaren to outpace Red Bull's four-time world champion by 0.363sec with Mercedes' George Russell third, 0.079 further behind.

Championship leader Norris has a 12-point lead over Verstappen, who is seeking a record-equalling fifth consecutive title, with McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri a further four points back.

A podium finish will be enough for Norris to clinch the title in Sunday's three-way showdown at the Yas Marina Circuit where Verstappen could become the fourth driver to take the title



McLaren's British driver Lando Norris drives during the first practice session

without leading the championship – a feat previously achieved by John Surtees (1974), James Hunt (1976) and Sebastian Vettel (2010).

The 2010 race, with four contenders, was the last time more than two drivers contested the title at the final race.

Piastri, who missed the opening practice to allow a rookie reserve to take his car, was down in 11th after reporting balance problems. He was six-tenths adrift.

Oliver Bearman was fourth for Haas ahead of Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg and Gabriel Bortoleto, Racing Bulls' Red Bull-



**McLaren boss Zak Brown confirmed the team will use team orders during the race if necessary to support one driver's championship bid**

bound rookie Isack Hadjar and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.

Two-time champion Fernando Alonso was ninth for Aston Martin and Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli 10th in the second Mercedes.

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, who was one of the nine drivers who sat out the opening session, was 14th for Ferrari as he ends a forlorn debut season with the Italian team at a circuit where he has enjoyed three victories.

After an early fastest lap by Bearman, top spot was swiftly traded by several drivers in the cooling conditions as the track

## McLaren will make 'practical' call on team orders in Abu Dhabi, says boss Brown

McLaren boss Zak Brown yesterday confirmed his team will exercise team orders to secure the drivers' title in Sunday's decisive season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix if it becomes clear during the race that only one remains a contender.

Speaking to reporters at a team chiefs' news conference at the Yas Marina Circuit following opening practice, Brown stressed that the team will "use common sense" and abandon their 'papaya rules' guaranteeing total equality and freedom to race.

"In the sense of team orders, as long as both drivers have a chance to win the world championship – which they clearly do sitting here right now – then it's business

as usual and they're free to race," said Brown.

"Obviously we'll be practical and realistic. If, as the weekend develops, as the race develops, it becomes clear that one has a significantly better chance than another, then we're a team that wants to win the drivers' championship and we will race accordingly to do whatever we can to get whoever that driver is in front to try and win the race.

"Our team orders have been around giving equal opportunity to win the championship, but as the race plays out, if it becomes clear that both can't, then we're going to do what's in the best interest of the team and try and win the drivers' championship."

temperature dropped from 39 degrees in the opening session to 28 and the floodlights came on.

That drop improved the conditions and prospects for some teams, dusk bringing more grip and speed as Norris re-established his supremacy ahead of Verstappen with Russell in pursuit in his revived Mercedes.

By mid-session, after switching from mediums to softs, they were separated by three-tenths

with Piastri down in 10th, six-tenths adrift, after missing the earlier run to allow reserve rookie driver Pato O'Ward to enjoy a session.

The Australian reported balance issues on his car, evidenced by a big lock-up at Turn Six, as he continued to struggle for pace with 20 minutes remaining and most focussing on long run preparation for the race on hard compounds.

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