

Hamilton sets scintillating pace

● Lewis Hamilton edges Max Verstappen under the Singapore lights during second practice

● Verstappen led the way in first practice

AFP | Singapore

Championship leader Lewis Hamilton lived up to his status as pre-race favourite for the Singapore Grand Prix when the Mercedes driver soared to the top of the timesheets with a storming lap in the second free practice session at a floodlit Marina Bay Street Circuit yesterday.

The Briton, who has won four times in Singapore, is well on course for a sixth world title after recording eight victories in 2019.

His scintillating form around two practice sessions and the demanding 23-turn layout suggest he will be celebrating a



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

ninth triumph of the campaign on Sunday night.

Hamilton spent the first session churning out race simu-

lation laps on the more durable hard compound tyres as he clocked the third fastest time behind Red Bull's Max Verstappen

and Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel, who had set their best laps on the quicker soft tyres.

However, once the Briton was



Lewis Hamilton led second practice in Singapore by just 0.184s over Max Verstappen

unleashed with softs fitted on his Mercedes and 50 minutes to go in the second session, he immediately clocked a day's best 1:38.773 seconds to leave all but Verstappen trailing in his wake.

Hamilton's lap was far from perfect as he made a number of mistakes in the first two sectors, but he was still able to record a time 0.184 seconds quicker than his Dutch rival with Vettel leading the rest of the pack a distant

0.818 seconds off the pace.

The Mercedes was even more impressive during the race simulations, but Hamilton will be wary of the threat posed by Red Bull and the Ferraris of Vettel and Charles Leclerc, who has won the last two races.

The Italian team was consistently the fastest in the first sector before losing time through the more technical sections of the layout.

Valtteri Bottas, perhaps mindful of the heavy crash that ended his first practice session, drove cautiously and was more than a second slower than his Mercedes team mate in identical conditions, leaving his chances of eating into Hamilton's 63-point championship lead looking remote at best.

After Bottas smashed into the barriers in the afternoon, the second session passed without any major drama.

Alex Albon's low-speed crash into the run-off area at Turn 10 and a late spin by Romain Grosjean were the only two incidents to bring out yellow caution flags.

Marquez fastest despite Yamaha challenge

AFP | Alcaniz, Spain

Three Yamahas outpaced Marc Marquez in the second practice session for the Aragon GP yesterday but the Spaniard remained fastest because of his time in the morning session.

Maverick Vinales, Valentino Rossi and Fabio Quartararo were the quickest in the afternoon but none of these three riders was able to approach Marquez's morning time of 1min 46.689sec.

Vinales set the best afternoon time in 1:48.014, 0.057sec ahead of factory Yamaha teammate Valentino Rossi. With Quartararo, who rides for a Yamaha satellite team, 0.103sec slower.

If the forecast rain arrives on Saturday morning for the third



Repsol Honda Team's Spanish rider Marc Marquez rides during the second MotoGP free practice session

practice session, it could make it more difficult for the others to stop Honda's Marquez, the five-time world champion, taking

pole position.

Apart from Marquez, who escaped a crash unscathed, all the other riders improved their

times in the afternoon, with fellow Spaniard Pol Espargaro putting his KTM in fifth.

Marquez leads Andrea Dovizioso of Ducati by 93 points with six races left to run. The Italian only had the eighth best combined time in the first two practice sessions.

The riders with the ten fastest times in the first three free practice sessions participate directly in Saturday's qualifying session (Q2), which determines the order of the top 12 places on the starting grid for the race on Sunday at 13:00 local time (1100 GMT).

Dhoni must quit international game before he's pushed: Gavaskar

Reuters | Mumbai



Mahendra Singh Dhoni

The time has come for India's long-serving wicketkeeper-batsman

Mahendra Singh

Dhoni to bow out of international cricket - and he should go before he's pushed, batting great Sunil Gavaskar said.

Former captain Dhoni has been the subject of intense speculation among fans, ex-players and pundits over when he will retire from international cricket since India's semi-final exit from the World Cup.

The veteran of 350 one-dayers, who quit playing tests at

the end of 2014, has not provided any hint of what his plans are.

However he made himself unavailable for India's tour of the West Indies and instead opted to spend 15 days with India's territorial army, a reservist force that draws on civilians who can do short stints to assist the military.

Dhoni was also a notable omission from India's Twenty20 squad for the ongoing three-match series against South Africa.

"Nobody knows what's in MSD's mind. Only he can clarify what he thinks his future with Indian cricket is," former India captain and opening batsman Gavaskar told India Today.

"But he's now 38, by the time the next T20 World Cup comes he will be over 39 years old. I think India should be looking ahead."

Dhoni captained India to the World Twenty20 crown in 2007, and the 50-over World Cup title at home four years later, and enjoys cult status in the cricket-mad country.

Federer happy for China to host Laver Cup

Reuters | Geneva

Roger Federer said he would be happy for the Laver Cup to be played in China in the future, ahead of the tournament's third edition starting yesterday in Geneva.

After the inaugural Laver Cup contested between Team Europe and Team World was held in Prague in 2017, last year's tournament in Chicago drew sellout crowds as Federer and world number one Novak Djokovic helped Europe win 13-8.

"Why not... it's completely open and flexible, but you have got to ask the Laver Cup people," 20-times Grand Slam champion Federer told report-

China has been a good place for us players. The tournaments in Shanghai and Beijing, they've been big. It's growing there as well with all the tournaments that are coming now, also on the women side

ROGER FEDERER

ers on Thursday.

"I'm sure they're looking into it, where it's going to go for the next decade or so.

"China has been a good place for us players. The tournaments in Shanghai and Beijing, they've been big. It's growing there as well with all the tournaments that are coming now, also on the women side.

"Sure, there's other countries and

cities that really also would like it in the future. I just like it to be in the place that is super excited about hosting the Laver Cup like Prague, Chicago and now also Geneva has shown, that would be the same in China if it ever goes there."

Europe also won the first edition and Team World captain John McEnroe said he hoped they could finally get one over their rivals in Switzerland.

"This is a great event and a great format I believe for our team," McEnroe said. "We've been very close obviously.

"So close yet so far, so it would be awesome if this time we can get over the hump, get a little luck going our way and step up."

Team World's Nick Kyrgios echoed McEnroe's sentiments and said he was looking forward to what is one of his favourite weeks of the year.

"The way we've come together as a group, our chemistry is much better than Team Europe's and I think that gives us a good shot in every year," Kyrgios said.



Roger Federer

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