

Hamilton shines under BIC lights

Reigning F1 world champion sets the pace in both F1 practice sessions at Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix

● Hamilton leads Bottas for world champions Mercedes in first practice

● Reigning world champion then clocks best lap in second session at night

● Albon crashes on last turn in FP2, bringing out the red flag for a brief period

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Lewis Hamilton in action at BIC track during yesterday's second practice

Sparks were flying last night as seven-time Formula 1 world champion Lewis Hamilton put on a show on the first day of the F1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix weekend at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

Hamilton was the fastest man in both 90-minute F1 practices yesterday, maintaining his fine form in an already remarkable title-winning season that has included 10 victories from the 14 races prior to coming to Bahrain.

Last night's second session was an eventful one, as it saw a crash midway through involving Red Bull Racing's Alexander Albon, bringing out the red flag.

After action resumed under BIC's bright lights, Hamilton took the place of Max Verstappen at the top of the timesheet, clocking a best lap of one minute 28.971 seconds. He completed 28 laps.

Verstappen had to settle for the second place with a lap 0.347 seconds slower in his Red Bull with 34 laps, while Valtteri Bottas in the other Mercedes car was third-fastest 0.365 behind his teammate and 30 laps done.

Hamilton commented: "It's great to get back out on the track, I just love driving this car. Today felt a bit more like a test day though as we didn't get to

do a lot of qualifying style laps, instead it was a lot of discovery on next year's tyres. This track works the tyres completely differently compared to the last race in Turkey, it's a night and day difference. "I wasn't particularly happy with the balance of the car, but everyone is probably in a similar position as the track was quite slippery and dusty. We definitely got some work overnight to try and improve ahead of tomorrow."

Crash

Verstappen was leading when the practice was suspended due to Albon's crash. Albon lost control of his car on the last corner, spun and hit the barrier, causing significant damage to the chassis. He was able to step out of the cockpit without assistance and was taken for some medical checks by race officials.

Rounding out the top eight in F1's practice two were Sergio Perez of Racing Point, Daniel Ricciardo of Renault, Pierre Gasly of AlphaTauri, Lando Norris of McLaren and Perez's teammate Lance Stroll.

Today's schedule

Time	Series	Session
11am	Porsche Sprint Challenge ME	Qualifying
11.05am	Formula 1	Team Pit Stop Practice
12.10pm	Formula 2	First Race (32 laps)
1.30pm	Formula 2	Press conference
2pm	Formula 1	Third Practice
3.50pm	Porsche Sprint Challenge ME	First Race
4.45pm	-Sunset-	
5pm	Formula 1	Qualifying
7pm	Formula 1	Press conference



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LEWIS HAMILTON

The rest of the drivers were classified in the following order: Daniil Kvyat, Albon, Esteban Ocon, Sebastian Vettel, Carlos Sainz, Charles Leclerc, Antonio Giovinazzi, Kevin Magnussen, Kimi Raikkonen, Nicholas Latifi, Romain Grosjean and George Russell.

In the day's opening practice, Hamilton overcame some light sporadic rain to clock a best lap of 1:29.033 while putting in 40 laps of work. He was 0.449s

quicker than Bottas, who finished with 41 laps. Perez was third in the classification, 0.967s off the pace with 31 laps.

Rounding out the top eight in the first F1 practice were Sainz, Gasly, Verstappen, Albon, and Ocon.

A third F1 practice will take place today over 60 minutes at 2pm, to be followed by qualifying at 5pm.

The Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix marks the 15th of 17 rounds in the 2020 FIA F1 World Championship. It is the first time in the history of the event that it is being held so late in the season, and it kicks off the first-ever F1 double-header to be hosted by the Kingdom.

The Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix will be followed by the F1 Rolex Sakhir Grand Prix from December 4 to 6, capping the back-to-back races at BIC.



Alexander Albon walks away from his crash



Lewis Hamilton's remarkable 2020 title-winning season has included 10 victories from 14 races, including the last four Grands Prix prior to Bahrain

Intruder alert!

Just before the resumption of F1's second practice session last night following the crash of Alexander Albon, a stray dog was spotted running on the track, prompting hilarious reactions from a number of F1 drivers that were broadcast on a live television feed at BIC.

The canine quickly retreated to safety and the action was able to resume. Pictured right, an image of the dog running on track as shown on the television screens at BIC's Media Centre.



Evans, Wagner top Porsche practice times

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Jaxon Evans and Richard Wagner took turns yesterday to lead the field in the two free practices of the Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East, supporting the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix.

Evans set the pace in FP2 under lights, while Wagner was quickest during the day session.

Evans was quickest by the narrowest of margins in the evening, clocking a best lap of two minutes 04.385 seconds in the session, in which he completed 14 laps. He was followed by Julian Hanses who was a mere 0.001secs behind, while JB Simmenauer was classified third 0.301s adrift. Each of the top three were competing in the series' GT3 class Pro category.

Lucas Groeneveld was fastest among the Pro-Am participants while Eddy Waldhler was quickest amongst the Am runners.



Jaxon Evans steers his car during second practice

Bahrainis Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Al Khalifa (Pro-Am) and Shaikh Jaber bin Ali Al Khalifa (Am) were ninth and 10th, respectively.

Earlier in the day yesterday, Wagner kicked off the Porsche season after topping the first practice times with a best lap of 2:05.094.

Jesse Van Kuijk followed

with a best lap that was just 0.053s slower, while Hanses was third quickest with a lap 0.321s off the pace.

Action in the Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East resumes today with qualifying, scheduled for 11am. That will be followed by the first 12-lap race of the weekend at 3.50pm. Race two will be held tomorrow.

Ilott captures pole for F2 Feature Race

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Callum Ilott clinched pole position for today's Feature Race in the FIA Formula 2 Championship, being held in support of this weekend's Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC).

The Uni-Virtuosi driver registered a fastest lap of one minute 41.479 seconds in a tight qualifying session, in which each of the top 12 drivers were classified within a second of one another.

Ilott was challenged by Felipe Drugovich for pole, but the MP Motorsport man had to settle for the other front row grid position after setting a best lap that was 0.391 seconds slower.

Dan Ticktum of Dams and Marcus Armstrong of ART Grand Prix will start the Feature from row two, while Ilott's teammate Guanyu Zhou and MP's Giuliano Alesi will be on



F2 drivers in action

row three.

Leaders of the day's F2 practice, Nikita Mazepin of Hitech Grand Prix and Jehan Daruvala of Carlin, qualified seventh and eighth, respectively, in the 22-car field.

Today's Feature will consist of 32 laps. It will get underway

at 12.20pm at BIC.

Earlier in the day yesterday, Mazepin powered to the top of the timesheet in practice with a fastest lap of 1:42.660.

Daruvala and teammate Yuki Tsunoda followed, with Daruvala 0.122 seconds behind and Tsunoda 0.258s back.