

Norris stuns Verstappen

Secures pole at Austrian GP with stunning last lap

AFP | Spielberg, Austria

Lando Norris delivered a superb final flying lap in his McLaren yesterday to end Max Verstappen's run of domination in qualifying at the Red Bull Ring by claiming pole position for the Austrian Grand Prix.

The 25-year-old Briton clocked an outstanding lap in one minute and 3.971 seconds to outpace nearest rival Charles Leclerc of Ferrari by 0.521 seconds, with McLaren team-mate and championship leader Oscar Piastri third.

Norris, who is 22 points behind Piastri in the drivers' title race, erased any hangover from his collision with Piastri in Canada two weeks ago with a thrilling demonstration of his speed and talent.

"It was a good lap, that's for sure," said Norris. "I guess that just little bit by little bit, I was able to get more time. Q1 was good, but I knew there were a few places I could get more time and I did what I planned to do."

Verstappen had taken pole position at the Red Bull-owned circuit in the Styrian Alps for the last five F1 races before Norris succeeded and seized his first pole in Austria, his third of the season and 12th of his career.



Pole position winner McLaren's British driver Lando Norris (L) poses with the pole position award



Pole position winner McLaren's British driver Lando Norris (L) speaks with team mate third placed McLaren's Australian driver Oscar Piastri

Team-mate Piastri was disappointed and frustrated.

Verstappen's last lap was stymied by a yellow flag waved

when Gasly spun in his Alpine, leaving him, like Piastri, unable to clock a flying lap time. He finished seventh.

Leclerc said: "I'm very pleased. It's been a long time since we started on the front row and it's been a difficult season overall, but the team has kept pushing."

"We brought some new parts this weekend which for sure made a difference. We know we have a better car in the race than in qualifying so I hope we can put more pressure on the McLarens."

Leclerc's Ferrari team-mate Lewis Hamilton was an encouraging fourth ahead of Mercedes' George Russell, Liam Lawson of Racing Bulls, four-time champion Verstappen of Red Bull and Gabriel Bortoleto of Sauber.

Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli was ninth in the second Mercedes and Gasly 10th.

'Worse than before'

The session began in hot conditions with temperatures of 32 (air) and 48 (track) indicating hard work for tyres.

After a frantic finale, in which Russell recovered from the drop zone to 11th, it was Aston Martin's Lance Stroll, Esteban Ocon of Haas, Red Bull's Yuki Tsuno-

da, Carlos Sainz in the second Williams and Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg who were eliminated.

McLaren, led by Norris, set the pace.

The entire field was separated by less than a second with the Red Bulls of Verstappen and Tsunoda, sixth and 18th, only 0.25 seconds apart. It was Sainz's third consecutive Q1 exit.

The track temperature touched 50 at the start of Q2 with Ferrari leading the way on



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used softs as Norris established his supremacy again before a trackside grass fire prompted a red flag stoppage, Hamilton having run wide there at turn 10.

Verstappen was unhappy with his car's reaction to the heat. "No grip, it's worse than before," he reported. "I don't know what to say!" After six minutes, the action resumed with only four to go as Norris and Piastri set the pace ahead of Leclerc while two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin, Williams' Alex Albon, Racing Bulls rookie Isack Hadjar, Franco Colapinto of Alpine and Oliver Bearman of Haas missed out.

All this left Bortoleto celebrating his first top ten qualification in fifth for the improving Sauber outfit while Verstappen complained he was impeded by a Ferrari in a way that was "a bit naughty and super unnecessary".

As Q3 began, Russell almost hit a Ferrari when he was released into their path narrowly avoiding a collision.

On the first runs, Norris was fastest again ahead of Leclerc with Piastri third and Hamilton fourth, the Ferraris enjoying the heat as Mercedes wilted before Norris stormed to pole.

Sri Lanka crush Bangladesh

AFP | Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka completed a thumping innings and 78-run victory over Bangladesh before lunch on day four of the second Test in Colombo on Saturday, wrapping up the two-match series 1-0.

Resuming the day on a precarious 115-6, the visitors still trailed by 97 runs and needed a minor miracle to avoid an innings defeat.

Any hopes of a rearguard were dashed almost immediately.

Left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya, under the pump after a wicketless outing in the first innings, struck gold with the fifth ball of the morning

as Litton Das edged behind to wicketkeeper Kusal Mendis for 14.

With that scalp, the last recognised batter was back in the hut and Bangladesh's house of cards came tumbling down soon after, all out for 133.

It was a clinical all-round performance by hosts Sri Lanka, who walked away with crucial World Test Championship points.

None of the visiting batters managed to cross fifty in the match -- a far cry from the first Test in Galle, which ended in a draw when captain Najmul Hossain Shanto hit twin cen-

turies. Bangladesh had won the toss on a docile Colombo pitch but squandered the advantage, bundled out for 247.

Sri Lanka replied in commanding fashion, piling on 458 to take a hefty 211-run lead.

The foundation was laid by a masterclass from opener Pathum Nissanka, who crafted a fluent 158 -- his second successive century in the series -- while Dinesh Chandimal chipped in with a polished 93.

The pair added 194 runs for the second wicket, putting the game firmly in Sri Lanka's control.

Bangladesh threatened brief-

ly when the second new ball brought them three quick wickets, but Kusal steadied the ship with a counterattacking 84, ensuring the hosts didn't let the momentum slip.

Nissanka, who was declared man of the match, said he was "very pleased with the effort".

"It feels good to contribute. I am now the senior opener with Dimuth Karunaratne retired and I try to do my best for the team," he said.

Bangladesh captain Shanto called it a "very disappointing game".

"The way we batted in the first innings is when things

went wrong for us. A total of 247 was not good on this pitch.

"No harm with the decision to bat first. But the way we got out was very disappointing. One good thing was the way our bowlers kept fighting."

"That will be one positive we will take from this series."

The two sides will now shift focus to the limited-overs leg of the tour, with three one-day internationals and three T20s.

Brief scores:

Bangladesh first innings: 247 all out in 79.3 overs (Shadman Islam 46, Mushfiqur

Rahim 35, Sonal Dinusha 3-22, Asitha Fernando 3-51)

Sri Lanka first innings: 458 all out in 116.5 overs (Pathum Nissanka 158, Dinesh Chandimal 93, Kusal Mendis 84, Taijul Islam 5-131)

Bangladesh second innings: 133 all out in 44.2 overs (Mushfiqur Rahim 26, Prabath Jayasuriya 5-56)

Sri Lanka's players pose with the trophy after their win in the end of the fourth day of the second Test cricket match against Bangladesh at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) in Colombo



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