

17th March 2023

2023 SAUDI ARABIAN GRAND PRIX - FRIDAY

Yuki Tsunoda (AT04-02, Car 22)**First Practice Session – Best lap: 1:31.110, pos. 10th, 25 laps****Second Practice Session – Best lap: 1:30.776, pos. 13th, 30 laps**

“The circuit is safer in terms of visibility, though the characteristics haven’t changed much. What we’ve seen from practice today is that we are slightly behind those consistently fighting for P10, but we still have one more day to put it all together. There were no major issues during FP1 and FP2, but we know that we have to find more performance in the car. Even if Q3 is the target, Q2 is more possible tomorrow than it was in Bahrain last week. In the end, we’ll analyse all our data tonight to see how we can improve our performance. Tyre degradation doesn’t seem as bad as expected, so we can push flat out.”

Nyck de Vries (AT04-02, Car 21)**First Practice Session – Best lap: 1:31.450, pos. 13th, 29 laps****Second Practice Session – Best lap: 1:30.921, pos. 17th, 29 laps**

“It was my first time driving the track here in Jeddah, it’s fun to learn and quick to drive. It is a challenge, but I like driving the track. Our day was productive. The midfield is just super close, as there are only a couple of tenths between P11 and P20, so we’ll have to see what happens tomorrow. It can easily go in a good or bad way, therefore, we will make sure to be on top of our game to extract the maximum for qualifying tomorrow.”

Jonathan Eddolls (Chief Race Engineer)

“A lot of analysis had been completed by the engineers between Bahrain and this event, which led to some interesting directions to try with the set-up at this track. Saudi Arabia’s characteristics are quite different, in particular, with the requirement for a more efficient car and good performance in high-speed. In some ways, we expected this to suit our car better. The focus in FP1 for Nyck was to complete as many laps as possible, given that it’s his first time driving here. For Yuki, we had a number of aero tests to complete, so we had to sacrifice some time in the garage to complete these; but they are important to help with development. Similar to Bahrain, the first session of the day was considerably hotter than the second, so we needed to take what we learned and apply that to the lower temperatures in FP2. The wind dropped considerably between sessions, which made the car more consistent. FP2 was all about understanding how to maximise the short-run performance on the Soft tyre. We weren’t able to get it on the first timed lap, but we will work overnight to try to improve this. Then the focus shifted to the graining on the softer compounds, which was a massive issue from 2022. We appear to have made a step, so we now need to take all of the data gathered today and figure out the optimum strategy and tyre choice for Sunday. Overall, we were satisfied with the day, the midfield is very compact, but we think we have a car that is able to compete in that group here.”

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