

28th July 2023

2023 BELGIAN GRAND PRIX - FRIDAY

Yuki Tsunoda (AT04-04, Car 22)**First Practice Session – Best lap: 2:09.067, pos. 7th, 8 laps****Qualifying - Best lap: (Q1) 1:59.044, (Q2) 1:53.148, pos. 11th**

“The pace was pretty good, and I’m happy with the lap I put together. In the end, most of the cars were behind me, so they used the opportunity as the track was improving fairly quickly. The team called me in and put on the soft compound, which I didn’t expect to be quicker, but it worked. In the end, it was the right decision, so thanks to them. If you drive with the dry tyres on this track, and some corners flat out, it’s always a joy to drive here. It wasn’t quite flat out today, because the track was still drying, but it was still fun, and I’m looking forward to tomorrow. The car was good and consistent, and I think the team gathered good knowledge about the car on the intermediate compound, which we struggled with three races ago, so we definitely made a huge step there. I was always feeling comfortable, and we were in good shape. Overall, I think it was a good day for the team; Daniel would’ve been through to Q2 if it wasn’t for track limits, so it’s encouraging for us.”

Daniel Ricciardo (AT04-03, Car 3)**First Practice Session – Best lap: 2:09.319, pos. 9th, 7 laps****Qualifying - Best lap: (Q1) 2:02.159, pos. 19th**

“It’s frustrating to have my lap time deleted because of track limits at Turn 4. I tried to take Eau Rouge flat, I thought it was possible, but I was drifting off the good line and had to lift to try to stay on track, but it was just drifting. As soon as I got over the Turn 4 kerb, I knew I was probably over. I tried to put it behind me and keep going with the lap – you have an idea, but you never really know if you’re off, so I obviously kept pushing. I thought it was possible, but it wasn’t quite yet. Our qualifying position hurts me for Sunday, but fortunately, we have another chance tomorrow. I don’t like making mistakes obviously, but there’s the big picture where we’re doing ok. I’ll put it behind me and learn from it because there’s a lot to be encouraged by.”

Jonathan Eddolls (Chief Race Engineer)

“A sprint weekend format in a heavily rain-affected Belgium GP weekend made for an interesting Friday of running. FP1 was a washout, with the rain intensity and conditions changing rapidly. We did some laps on the full wet compound, to gauge track condition, but with the rain intensity increasing, we had to abort. We finally got onto the intermediate tyre, but a Red Flag brought the session to a close before either driver completed a timed lap, so we had little data heading into qualifying. That said, we had enough to know that the intermediate compound looked like a fast tyre in most of the conditions we were likely to face. Rain before qualifying meant the session started for intermediate tyres, so we geared the run plans to have time available to go out for a single lap on a new set of intermediate tyres at the end, when we knew the track would be at its fastest. Both drivers’ lap times were very competitive, but in trying to go flat in Eau Rouge, Daniel slid slightly wide, and the lap was deleted for track limits. It was super unfortunate because it was clear he would’ve been competitive in the later sessions. Yuki made it through to Q2, and with the lap times close to the crossover between wet and dry tyres, we went with the intermediate compound and then decided to go for two consecutive push laps on dry tyres at the end of the session. Yuki set a very good lap time on the soft compound, but we didn’t quite have the pace to make it through to Q3. We were one of the first to cross the line, so potentially we could’ve gone later and taken the track improvement, but then you always run the risk of catching a yellow or red flag. In any case, we’re happy with the performance today and believe we have a good setup for Sunday, where we expect to have some dry running in the race.”

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