

23rd September 2023

2023 JAPANESE GRAND PRIX - SATURDAY

Yuki Tsunoda (AT04-04, Car 22)**Third Practice Session - Best lap: 1:31.951, pos. 14th, 18 laps****Qualifying - Best lap: (Q1) 1:30.733, (Q2) 1:30.204, (Q3) 1:30.303, pos. 9th**

"It's incredibly special to get through to Q3 at your home Grand Prix. It was the first time in front of the Japanese fans, and the amount of support I felt in my final runs was great. I've never felt that kind of support from spectators. A big thank you to them, but an even bigger thanks to my team. It wasn't easy because we struggled in Free Practice on Friday, but the team did an amazing job of finding improvements. The car was great and really fun to drive, so I'm looking forward to tomorrow. I haven't raced with the new package in Singapore, but Liam did a good job last weekend and performed nicely, so I'm not worried about the race. I'll go out and enjoy tomorrow with all the fans. It will be tricky because tyre degradation seems to be a challenge here, but it's the same for everyone, so let's see what we can do. Liam and I are both starting in good positions, so hopefully, we'll both be able to score points for the team."

Liam Lawson (AT04-02, Car 40)**Third Practice Session - Best lap: 1:32.048, pos. 17th, 18 laps****Qualifying - Best lap: (Q1) 1:30.425, (Q2) 1:30.508, pos. 11th**

"It's a bit frustrating not making it to Q3 by such a small margin. With the information we had after Free Practice, we weren't expecting to be super strong, so we went quite aggressive with tyres in Q1 and only had one new set of the soft compound tyres left for Q2. To be honest, I wasn't super confident before qualifying, so I think we made the right call with the information we had, and Yuki did a great job putting the car in Q3. Now it's about making the most of tomorrow's race. I think it will be a long afternoon because the tyres are struggling a lot, but it's the same for everybody. We have to focus on extracting the maximum out of our package and hopefully, both Yuki and I will have a strong race."

Jonathan Eddolls (Chief Engineer)

"The engineers put a lot of work into the analysis overnight to understand why we took a step back in FP2 and weren't able to show the expected pace. This culminated in a number of setup changes to evaluate in FP3. The changes improved the car, but our tyre usage of a medium set followed by a soft tyre set dictated what we wanted to save for qualifying. It was more difficult to know exactly where we were because most others ran two sets of the soft compound during practice. We weren't able to extract the most from the soft tyre, so we had some work to do to understand how to approach qualifying with the lower expected track temperature. With both drivers having five sets of the soft compound, we decided the safest thing for Liam was to use three soft tyre sets in Q1. The red flag came on the out lap of his second run, but there was time remaining at the restart to do two runs with a pitstop. The team reacted well to this, and both cars comfortably went through. In Q2, the drivers gave it their all. It was very, very close in the region we were fighting, but having the extra new soft tyre set allowed Yuki to extract enough performance to progress through to Q3, with Liam just missing out by 43 milliseconds. The wind increased slightly, and we weren't able to improve on our Q2 lap in Q3. In the end, we're within one-tenth of the Mercedes in front and leading the midfield pack in qualifying, so the team should be proud that we continue to develop and improve the AT04. Tomorrow will be a different story, and I expect tyre degradation to be a big challenge with the high track temperatures and heavy fuel. We're at a slight disadvantage to most teams by having only one hard compound set, but we'll work on a strategy to maximise the race result within the constraints we have."

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