

6th October 2023

2023 QATAR GRAND PRIX – FRIDAY

Yuki Tsunoda (AT04-04, Car 22)**First Practice Session – Best lap: 1:28.027, pos. 6th, 28 laps****Qualifying - Best lap: (Q1) 1:26.058, (Q2) 1:25.301, pos. 11th**

“I’m pleased with my performance. On such a high-speed corner track, it’s easy to exceed track limits, but so far, I haven’t, so I’m happy. It would’ve been good to be in Q3, so it’s not exactly the qualifying we wanted, but it’s still close to the points, so it’s okay. There are places I can improve on, but the car’s upgrades are working, so we’re feeling optimistic. There’s margin for improvement, and tomorrow is another day for qualifying, so I’m looking forward to it because it’s another chance to do better than today. The conditions were tricky today because the wind in FP1 was extreme but calmed down for qualifying, and the temperature dropped, so it was slightly easier to drive. The car turns differently in some corners from one lap to the next because of the wind, but it’s one of the track’s characteristics that makes it interesting and fun to drive.”

Liam Lawson (AT04-02, Car 40)**First Practice Session – Best lap: 1:29.238, pos. 19th, 29 laps****Qualifying - Best lap: (Q1) 1:26.635, pos. 18th**

“Today was tricky. Since we hit the track in FP1, I’ve been struggling with the car, and I know everybody was with the way the track was. I think we narrowed down the issues we experienced in practice, but not enough, and we still have things to look into. The track was quite dusty in FP1, but it cleaned up a lot for qualifying and was a lot better. The final laps felt good, but I was struggling with the handling of the car. There are some corners we need to look into to find more time because I didn’t have the confidence to really push and put it on the limit, but with the different format this weekend, there are definitely opportunities.”

Jonathan Eddolls (Chief Race Engineer)

“As is typical for a Sprint event, it has been a very busy and challenging Friday with very difficult conditions on track. Gusts up to 45kph impacted the handling of the car but also brought a lot of sand onto the circuit and the track was very green at the start of FP1. In fact, the lap times improved by approximately 10 seconds from the start to the end of the session, and with these swings, the car balance was also changing. With the very low grip, the car had understeer, oversteer, and general sliding, so it was a case of giving the drivers as many laps as the time allowed to understand the main limitations. We improved the balance throughout FP1 but knew there was still more to do for qualifying. We had good run plans and executed Q1 well, but Liam didn’t have the consistent balance needed to progress through to Q2. At least with this format, he has another chance at the Sprint qualifying tomorrow. Yuki entered Q2 with two new sets of the soft compound and was able to improve on each run, but in the end, the last lap wasn’t quite enough to make it to Q3, missing out on a mere four milliseconds. It’s not the first time we have finished in P11 by such a small margin this season, but at least we start close to the points on Sunday. Understanding the tyres will be difficult for the race, so we will do all we can to maximise our opportunities. We now shift our focus to the Sprint qualifying preparations.”

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