

Sainz leads Ferrari one-two as Verstappen struggles in Singapore

Carlos Sainz tops timesheets during second practice session for the Singapore Grand Prix

● **Hamilton edges Verstappen to fastest time in opening practice**

AFP | Singapore

Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc powered their Ferraris to a one-two in second practice yesterday for the Singapore Grand Prix, while runaway championship leader Max Verstappen and Red Bull struggled on Formula One's return to Asia.

The Dutchman celebrated his 25th birthday yesterday with a cake in the Red Bull team hospitality before the first session, then spent most of the second in the garage with mechanics working on his front suspension.

Verstappen, who can retain his Formula One world championship with a race win on Sunday if other results go his way, did emerge late in the hour-long session for one qualifying simulation lap.



Ferrari's Carlos Sainz in action during practice

His time of 1min 42.926sec was good enough only for fourth, 0.339sec behind Sainz who clocked 1:42.587 around the Marina Bay street circuit.

"In FP2 we wanted to try a few things but it took a bit longer than we thought," said Verstappen of the delay in getting out of the garage.

"So it's not really representative."

Leclerc posted a time of 1:42.795, 0.208sec behind his teammate, and the Mercedes of George Russell was third at 1:42.911.

Earlier Lewis Hamilton had sprung a surprise with the quickest time in the opening practice session of the first Singapore race weekend since 2019 because of the Covid pandemic.



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But the seven-time world champion later struggled with stability over the bumps and kerbs which caused him to run wide on the last corner of his final flying lap to leave him fifth, 0.595sec adrift of Sainz.

Esteban Ocon's Alpine was sixth fastest, ahead of Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas.

Spain's Fernando Alonso, who will start a record 350th grand prix on Sunday, one more than Kimi Raikkonen's previous all-time mark, was eighth fastest in his Alpine.

Red Bull had looked more competitive early but both cars suffered with set-up issues under lights in the night session

with Sergio Perez ninth, 1.3sec behind Sainz.

Verstappen has an almost unassailable lead in the title chase but must win Sunday's race and see his closest rivals falter to clinch with five races to go, or the fight will move on to Japan next week.

Single-lap pace in qualifying is crucial at Singapore, where pole position is a huge advantage on the 23-turn Marina Bay Circuit that affords few opportunities to overtake.

Alex Albon was encouraged by completing two sessions in his Williams less than three weeks after appendicitis and complications from surgery.

The British-born Thai driver was 16th fastest in both, a severe test of his fitness in the heat and humidity of Singapore.

There was drama at the AlphaTauri garage when Pierre Gasly had to leap from his car with flames coming above his head, quickly extinguished by the pit crew. The Frenchman returned to the track a few minutes later unharmed.

American F1 driver not a necessity, says McLaren's Brown

Reuters | Singapore

Formula One does not need an American driver to boost the rapid growth of the sport in the United States, McLaren Racing Chief Executive Zak Brown said yesterday.

Brown's comments follow the decision by Formula One's governing International Automobile Federation (FIA) not to relax its super-licence rules so that American IndyCar driver Colton Herta could race for Red Bull's AlphaTauri team next year.

"I think the sport is going to continue to grow in America with or without an American driver," Brown, an American himself, said ahead of this weekend's Singapore Grand Prix.

"I think an American driver in the sport will be additive, but I don't think it's a necessity."

The US is a growing market for Formula One both in terms of viewership and money brought in by big corporate sponsors. Its commercial rights are owned by US-based Liberty Media.

The sport, which will have three US races next year, including a new night-time grand prix



McLaren CEO Zak Brown before a race (file photo)



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in Las Vegas, last had a US driver in 2015, with Alexander Rossi.

Rule revision?

Herta, who has previously tested in McLaren's 2021 F1 car, lacked the necessary points for a super-licence needed to enter Formula One.

"I respect that the rules are the rules, so I don't think we should be in the business of making exceptions," Brown said, echoing similar comments from other Formula One team bosses including Mercedes boss



The sport, which will have three US races next year, including a new night-time grand prix in Las Vegas, last had a US driver in 2015, with Alexander Rossi

Toto Wolff and Haas team principal Guenther Steiner.

However, Brown added that a revision of the rules may be necessary in the future to grant successful IndyCar drivers an easier path into Formula One.

"When you have someone like Herta who is clearly capable of being a Formula One driver, who has been in our Formula One car, who has won lots of races in IndyCar and he doesn't qualify, you have to look at the rules and question whether the rules should be reviewed again, and I think they should."

Arteta faces Jesus balancing act over Arsenal star's bookings

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta admits he faces a balancing act as the Arsenal manager lets Gabriel Jesus play his natural game while doing all he can to prevent the feisty striker from being suspended.

Jesus has scored four goals in seven Premier League games since joining from Manchester City, with his tally helping propel Arsenal to the top of the table ahead of Saturday's north



Gabriel Jesus

London derby against Tottenham.

However, the Brazil interna-



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MIKEL ARTETA

tional has already been shown four yellow cards in the Premier League this term.

A further booking against Tottenham would lead to a one-match ban ruling Jesus out of Arsenal's crunch clash with Liverpool on October 9.

Arteta acknowledges Jesus's fiery temperament but is wary of trying to rein in the forward too much.

"It's a thin balance. It's in his nature, he gets a lot of contact and puts his foot and his body on the line in every situation," Arteta told reporters yesterday.

MotoGP to host races in India, Kazakhstan next year in 21-race calendar

Reuters | London

MotoGP will make its debut in India and Kazakhstan in 2023 on a calendar which boasts more races and countries than ever before, it announced yesterday.

The 2023 season will begin with the Portuguese GP on March 24-26 and wrap up in Valencia on Nov. 24-26, according to the 21-race provisional calendar released by MotoGP.

Kazakhstan will become the 30th country to host a motorcycle grand prix since 1949 when the race takes place on July 7-9 at the Sokol International Racetrack in the north-west of Almaty.

The Indian GP will be held at the Buddh International Circuit in New Delhi from Sept. 22-24, while Le Mans will host the 1000th Grand Prix at the French GP on May 12-14.

"India is also a key market for the motorcycle industry



India is also a key market for the motorcycle industry and therefore, by extension, for MotoGP as the pinnacle of the two-wheeled world

CARMELO EZEPELETA, CEO OF COMMERCIAL RIGHTS HOLDERS DORNA SPORTS

and therefore, by extension, for MotoGP as the pinnacle of the two-wheeled world," Carmelo Ezpeleta, CEO of commercial rights holders Dorna Sports, said in a statement yesterday.

The 5.14km track on the outskirts of New Delhi held Formula One races between 2011-13 before it was dropped from the calendar.

The Kazakhstan and Indian grands prix are subject to contract and certification, MotoGP said.