

# Pourchaire, Saucy set testing pace

ART Grand Prix drivers top respective timesheets as F2, F3 pre-season testing kicks off at Bahrain International Circuit

● Theo Pourchaire leads 22-car F2 field with best lap of 1:42.165 under lights

● Gregoire Saucy tops 30-car F3 classification with 1:47.563 mark in afternoon

TDT | Manama



Theo Pourchaire in action during yesterday's morning F2 test

Theo Pourchaire and Gregoire Saucy topped their respective timesheets yesterday on the first day of pre-season testing in the FIA Formula 2 Championship and FIA Formula 3 Championship at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

Pourchaire set the overall pace to spearhead a highly competitive field of F2 runners, while Saucy had the fastest time on the combined timesheet amongst the younger aspirants of F3—putting ART Grand Prix at the front of the pack in both Formula 1 feeder series.

The day's fastest laps were set during the second sessions along BIC's 5.412-kilometre track, held under cooler temperatures and track conditions. Twenty-two

cars hit the tarmac for F2 while 30 tested in F3.

Testing continues today with a second day of alternating sessions. F3 will be the first to go out in the morning from 9am to 11.30am, and then again in the afternoon from 2.30pm to 5pm. F2's schedule on track will be from 11.45am to 2.15pm and then again from 5.15pm to 7.45pm.

Pourchaire was the fastest man overall in both of yesterday's F2 sessions. He set his best time of one minute 42.165 seconds late in his evening run under BIC's state-of-the-art floodlights. Pourchaire had earlier also registered the quickest lap of 1:45.226 in F2's morning test.

Second overall for the day was Richard Verschoor of Van Amersfoort Racing with a lap of 1:42.293. Arthur Leclerc of DAMS was third-fastest on 1:42.471, while Ralph Boschung of Campos Racing came fourth with a best lap of 1:42.569 and Ayumu Iwasa of DAMS fifth on 1:42.669. Enzo Fittipaldi (1:42.739) of Rodin Carlin, Jack Doohan (1:42.753) and Jehan Daruvala (1:42.766) of MP Motorsport completed the overall top eight—all from the evening session.

In the morning, Daruvala (1:45.574) was classified behind Pourchaire, with Boschung (1:45.652) going third.

Meanwhile, in yesterday's F3 sessions, Saucy set the best in



Testing continues today with a second day of alternating sessions. The tests at BIC will be the only on-track running for F2 and F3 before the start of their 2023 seasons at the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix next month



Gregoire Saucy on track in F3 testing at BIC

both the morning and afternoon runs, with his afternoon mark of 1:47.563 being the day's quickest overall with the sun about to set on the Sakhir race track. The ART Grand Prix ace had earlier set a fastest lap of 1:49.155 in the morning.

Two-thirds of the field had better times after F3's midday break. Paul Aron set the day's second-best mark of 1:47.889 for PREMA Racing, while Josep Maria Marti of Campos was third with a 1:48.125 lap.

Saucy's ART teammate Kaylen

Frederick was classified fourth with a top time of 1:48.136, while Zak O'Sullivan of PREMA came fifth on 1:48.162. The Hitech Pulse-Eight pair of Luke Browning (1:48.206) and Gabriele Mini (1:48.214) were sixth and seventh fastest, followed by Dino Beganovic (1:48.279) who made it all three PREMA cars in the top eight.

During the morning, Saucy was followed on the session's timesheet by Taylor Bernard (1:49.199) of Jenzer Motorsport and O'Sullivan (1:49.448).

This week's testing action continues until tomorrow and

it is crucial for the F2 and F3 teams and ace pilots, as it will be the only on-track running they have ahead of their upcoming campaigns.

F2 and F3 will both be kicking off their 2023 seasons at BIC in support of the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix from 3 to 5 March. They will each hold two races during the F1 race weekend, along with practices and qualifying. Both series' Sprint Races will take place on the Saturday with the Feature Races to follow on Sunday, while practice and qualifying are scheduled for Friday.

## Luthfallah heroics send Ahli into HM the King's Cup final

● Al Ahli's Bahrain international goalkeeper makes two saves, scores clincher in 4-1 penalty shootout win over Riffa

TDT | Manama



Riffa's Komail Al Aswad dribbles the ball past Al Ahli's Vinicius Vargas Dos Santos during their match last night

Al Ahli barged through to the final of this year's His Majesty the King's Cup football tournament following a thrilling 4-1 penalty shootout victory over league champions Riffa last night at the Khalifa Sports City Stadium in Isa Town.

Goalkeeper Ebrahim Luthfallah was the hero for Ahli in the shootout, saving two of Riffa's spot kicks and then converting the clincher.

Komail Al Aswad and Abdullah Al Hashash each had a brace for their respective sides in regular time, and the score remained deadlocked at 2-2 after extra-time.

Ahli now head to the title-deciding match where they will face off with Al Hala, who defeated Manama 2-1 in extra-time in the other semi-final played on Monday. The final has yet to be scheduled by the Bahrain Football Association.

In the shootout, Luthfallah helped Ahli take a commanding 3-0 lead after saving the shots of Al Aswad and Ali Haram, while teammates Jamal Rashid, Vinicius Vargas Dos Santos and

Abbas Ayyad all scored. Lazar Dordevic then gave Riffa a lifeline at 1-3, but then Luthfallah closed the match out with his winning goal against Riffa's Abdulkarim Al Fardan.

Earlier, Al Aswad put Riffa ahead on the stroke of half-time after teammate Amin Fareed Al Shanaina was taken down in the box by Ahli's Baqer Mohammed Al Asfoor. Al Aswad stepped up to take the spot kick against Luthfallah, and he made no mistake with his effort, which he sent into the bottom-left corner of goal. That was enough to send Riffa into the half with the single-goal advantage.

After the re-start, it didn't take long for Ahli to level the scores as Al Hashash found the net just 12 minutes in.

Al Hashash hit a short stab

from the face of goal after a cross supplied by Hassan Madan from the left went unclaimed by Ahli teammate Marcolino Neto Silva in the area. The ball rolled towards goal and Al Hashash was at the right place at the right time, needing only to tap the ball into the net. That set the stage for Al Aswad's second, which was a low effort from just outside the six-yard box off a pass from Al Shanaina. It was a poorly hit shot but Al Aswad did enough to send the ball into the bottom-left corner.

Al Hashash then made it 2-2 for Ahli two minutes from the end of regulation, scoring following a scramble in the box off a rebound, after his first effort was stopped by Riffa's Al Fardan.

## Najma storm back to beat Dar Kulaib in five-setter

● Al Najma complete round-of-six playoffs with 9-1 win-loss record for first place, Dar Kulaib second on a 7-3 mark

● Al Najma now face off with Muharraq in Golden Square semis, while Dar Kulaib take on defending champs Al Ahli

TDT | Manama



Al Najma's Fadhel Abbas meets Dar Kulaib's Juan Barrera at the net during their match last night

Al Najma stormed back to reclaim a thrilling 3-2 (18-25, 25-23, 22-25, 26-24, 15-7) victory over Dar Kulaib last night in a clash of the titans that wrapped up the round-of-six playoffs in the 2022/2023 Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League.

The game was played at a packed Isa bin Rashid Arena at Isa Sports City in Riffa.

With Dar Kulaib on the verge of victory leading 24-21 in the fourth set, Najma came alive and scored the next five points to send the match into the tie-break.

There, they rode their momentum and took a 10-5 lead and never looked back.

The result earned Najma

the top seed at the end of the play-offs with a 9-1 win-loss record. Dar Kulaib finish with a 7-3 mark to claim the second seeds, while Al Ahli are third with a similar 7-3 record followed by Muharraq with a 4-6 mark. Al Nasser (3-7) and Nabih Saleh (0-10) complete the top-six standings.

Playing key roles for the victors yesterday were Estonian professional Kevin Saar, and Bahraini stars Ali Ebrahim, Fadhel Abbas, Hassan Dha-hi and Mohammed Habib, to

name a few.

Leading the way for Dar Kulaib in the loss were Argentinian professional Juan Barrera, along with Bahraini talents Mohammed Yaqoob, Ali Habib, Mahmoud Abdulwahed and libero Hussain Sultan, among others.

Najma now head into the Golden Square semi-finals with a twice-to-beat advantage as they face off with Muharraq. Dar Kulaib, meanwhile, play a best-of-three series against Al Ahli.