

ANTÓNIO FÉLIX DA COSTA WINS FIA F3 WORLD CUP IN MACAU

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António Félix da Costa (Carlin), who already won the Macau Grand Prix in 2012, added another win in the world's most prestigious Formula 3 race today. With his Dallara-Volkswagen, the Portuguese driver won the 15 lap race for the FIA F3 World Cup and became only the third two time winner of the event after Italian Edoardo Mortara and Swede Felix Rosenqvist. The latter, who was aiming for a record third Macau win following his back-to-back victories in 2014 and last year, drove his SJM Theodore Racing by Prema Dallara-Mercedes to second on his seventh participation in Macau. Brazilian Sérgio Sette Câmara, a protege of the Red Bull Junior Team, added to the success of British team Carlin by finishing third.

Sérgio Sette Câmara had a great getaway and moved up into the lead from third on the grid. Callum Iott (Van Amersfoort Racing), who started from the front row behind pole-sitter António Félix da Costa, dropped back to third and then even to fifth as he got caught on the outside under braking for the Lisboa right-hander on the opening lap. Behind early race leader Sette Câmara, Félix da Costa was second from Japanese F3 champion Kenta Yamashita (ThreeBond with T-Sport), but the Japanese was under massive pressure from Macau stalwart Felix Rosenqvist. The Swede's first attack on lap two was in vain, but on the next lap, he made his move stick under braking for Lisboa and moved up into third place. In the same manoeuvre, Iott also overtook Yamashita, who thus dropped to fifth.

A crash by Nikita Mazepin (HitechGP) at Païol on the fourth lap brought out the safety car that went on to lead the field for three laps. Racing resumed at the start of lap eight and after the restart, Félix da Costa made perfect use of the slipstream coming out of Mandarin to overtake Sette Câmara for the lead. New Zealand's Nick Cassidy (SJM Theodore Racing by Prema), who had suffered from a blown right rear tyre early in the race and had come in for a wheel change, was on a mission after his setback: from the back of the field following his stop, he was already up in eleventh place after nine laps. There, however, his progress came to a halt as he crashed into the wall, which caused the second safety car.

The field was released again on lap 13. Rosenqvist tried to repeat his move from the earlier restart, this time against Sette Câmara for second, but initially, it did not work out. One lap later, the Swede was successful, braking at the very last moment and finding a way to overtake the Brazilian. After that, he did everything to close the gap to race leader Félix da Costa, but as the yellow flags were out at Lisboa on the final lap after Arjun Maini (Motopark) had gone straight, Rosenqvist had no more opportunity to mount a challenge. Thus, Félix da Costa motored on to drive a safe victory home, with Rosenqvist second and Sette Câmara third. Yamashita, Iltis, Jake Hughes (Carlin), George Russell (HitechGP), Daniel Juncadella (HitechGP), Pedro Piquet (Van Amersfoort Racing) and Alexander Sims (Double R Racing) rounded out the top ten.

António Félix da Costa: “Maybe winning for the second time feels even better than the first one. I was not meant to drive an F3 car this year. It was a super-late call, I did only two days of testing. I came here with a car that doesn't have a single sponsor. Trevor (Carlin) said that he would try to find a sponsor for me, but I told him: ‘You know what, I love this race, I'll come and do it anyway’. I was really thrilled. Today was the only time of the month when I put pressure on myself, but I had a feeling that I could pull it off. Tiago (Monteiro) made it hard for me because he already won (the TCR race this morning). Today, I had to do it and I am so happy that I did it. My team gave me the car to do it and I did. I was super impressed with Sérgio the whole weekend. I think he has been the quickest of the team for most of the weekend. The first two laps, he just went away, but then I was able to close the gap. Then the safety car came, which was a good thing for me. I was close enough to make the pass at the restart, and then I was in front. During the second safety car intervention, I thought: ‘What can I do to surprise everyone?’ So I went super early. I had two corners to nail it and try to pull the gap. I have been through a rough season, attracting bad things all year, but the last three months have been really good: I was on pole in DTM, Formula E was good and to win here now is just amazing!”

Felix Rosenqvist: “I think we had a tough weekend where everything went a little bit against us. In the last years, it came to us easily, but this year, something was different and we had to work very hard. Yesterday, we weren't happy with the car. In P6, we had nothing to lose, so we decided to change the set-up completely. We really went for it and it worked out. I started to feel it when I came up behind Antonio that this was the battle (for the lead). I was pushing like hell and I managed to close quite a lot,

but it just wasn't enough. I thought we had some more laps left, but we didn't. But anyway, we are all happy with this result. Coming from two back-to-back wins, it is not the same, but it is like this sometimes."

Sérgio Sette Câmara: "For me, it is a great feeling to lead a race like this. Since yesterday night, I was thinking that I could maybe win Macau. We found something in the car after yesterday's race and I thought that I may be on it. It was looking really good for me. António was really on it, and so was Felix. It was really nice to watch the battle between them, especially from inside the car. During the second safety car, I thought I have to surprise everyone. The safety car turned the lights off too late and I couldn't do it. The rear of my car was stepping out at high speed, so I had no real chance. I am very happy. I hoped for a good result at Macau. I was eleventh in the FIA F3 European Championship this year, but that doesn't reflect my potential, as I had a lot of technical problems. Third place in a race like this should help my chances for next year and I should finalise my plans within the next few days."