

CALLUM ILOTT STARTS MONZA WEEKEND WITH FASTEST TIME

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While the FIA Formula 3 European Championship teams and drivers still had to deal with pouring rain during the official test day at the same venue two days ago, Monza's royal park welcomed them with bright sunshine for free practice. At the 5.793 kilometres long Grand Prix circuit, nobody was faster than Callum Ilott (Prema Powerteam, 1m44.261s). Maximilian Günther (Prema Powerteam, 1m44.355s) was classified second from the best-placed rookie, Jehan Daruvala (Carlin, 1m44.492s). Lando Norris (Carlin, 1m44.508s) was the second-best rookie in fourth place overall, from Nikita Mazepin (Hitech Grand Prix, 1m44.599s) and the leader in the drivers' standings, Swede Joel Eriksson (Motopark, 1m44.678s).

After an absence of one year, the FIA Formula 3 European Championship returned to Monza, a circuit with a long motor racing heritage near the Italian city of Milan. The Italian round is the home event for the Prema Powerteam that runs the quartet of Maximilian Günther, Callum Ilott, Guanyu Zhou (1m45.207s) and Mick Schumacher (1m45.244s). The two stalwarts Günther and Ilott, who already competed when the FIA Formula 3 European Championship visited Monza last time around, battled it out for the top spot in the final minutes of free practice, with British driver Ilott coming out on top. German Günther had to make do with second place, only 0.094 seconds down on his team-mate.

Behind the two seasoned drivers, rookies Jehan Daruvala from India and Lando Norris from the UK once again showed off their skills and claimed third and fourth place respectively. Russian Nikita Mazepin and Swede Joel Eriksson ended up in fifth and sixth place, ahead of Brits Jake Dennis (Carlin, 1m44.698s) and Harrison Newey (Van Amersfoort Racing, 1m44.701s). Marino Sato (Motopark, 1m44.759s), a Japanese Formula 3 novice, and Estonian Ralf Aron (Hitech Grand Prix, 1m44.835s) rounded out the top ten.

How close things are in the FIA Formula 3 European Championship once again became apparent by the fact that the lap times of the first 17 drivers were within one second. On his fastest lap, Mick Schumacher, who was classified 17th, was just 0.983 seconds slower than pace-setter Callum Ilott.