

Friday 2 September 2022

Martins bounces back to top Zandvoort opener

Victor Martins' efforts to reignite his fight for the title after a difficult weekend in Spa-Francorchamps were given a boost after the ART Grand Prix driver led the way during the opening session in Zandvoort. Laying down a benchmark of 1:25.688 ahead of the all-important Qualifying on Friday afternoon, he went nearly four-tenths clear of the MP Motorsport duo of Caio Collet and Alexander Smolyar.

In contrast to recent rounds, the drivers were greeted by September sunshine, but a moderate breeze along the seaside added another challenge to learning the physically demanding circuit – and unsurprisingly, plenty of runners found themselves taking a quick trip through the gravel traps.

It was a leisurely start to the session with only five drivers setting a time during the opening 12 minutes, as Francesco Pizzi set a 1:28.014 to go half a second clear of his teammate David Schumacher.

Bolting on a softer set of tyres compared to Formula 3's trip to the Dutch circuit last year, the focus was clear – finding the reference points. However, that wasn't as simple as drivers would have wanted. Putting in laps around the shortest circuit on the calendar, several drivers found themselves threading their way through traffic.

Meanwhile, Pizzi's long-standing time at the top of the timing sheets came to an end with both Roman Stanek and Kaylen Frederick leaping up into P1 momentarily, before Martins went over four tenths clear of his ART teammate Grégoire Saucy to claim the top spot. The Frenchman continued to improve over the following laps to a 1:25.668.

Brad Benavides didn't have an ideal start to the weekend off the back of his maiden points finish in Spa-Francorchamps, going off into the gravel at Turn 9 to bring out the Virtual Safety Car. A quick break in the pits gave the drivers a chance to look over their data, particularly tyre wear as it was clear that the rears were struggling despite a lack of hugely representative times, and some opted to give more than one set of their medium compounds a run around the Circuit Zandvoort.

As a flurry of cars headed out with seven minutes remaining, Collet and Smolyar climbed up the order, but the Brazilian remained 0.392s adrift of the Martins' leading time. Unfortunately, he wouldn't have any more attempts after Reece Ushijima brought out a second Virtual Safety Car. The Van Amersfoort Racing driver lost the rear end on the entrance to Turn 9 and with only three minutes to go, the cars slowly paraded into the pits.

That left Martins out in front at the top of the order, ahead of Collet and Smolyar. Jak Crawford, who will also be looking to recover lost ground from last time out, finished fourth, ahead of Franco Colapinto and the two Tridents of Roman Stanek and Jonny Edgar. Oliver Bearman ended his running in eighth, ahead of Saucy, while William Alatalo rounded out the top 10.

The penultimate Qualifying session of the season is scheduled to get underway at 14:00 local time.

2022 FIA FORMULA 3 CHAMPIONSHIP – ROUND 8 FREE PRACTICE PROVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION

	DRIVER	TEAM
1	Victor Martins	ART Grand Prix
2	Caio Collet	MP Motorsport
3	Alexander Smolyar	MP Motorsport
4	Jak Crawford	PREMA Racing
5	Franco Colapinto	Van Amersfoort Racing
6	Roman Stanek	Trident
7	Jonny Edgar	Trident
8	Oliver Bearman	PREMA Racing
9	Grégoire Saucy	ART Grand Prix
10	William Alatalo	Jenzer Motorsport
11	Zane Maloney	Trident
12	Isack Hadjar	Hitech Grand Prix
13	Ido Cohen	Jenzer Motorsport
14	Kaylen Frederick	Hitech Grand Prix
15	Rafael Villagómez	Van Amersfoort Racing
16	Enzo Trulli	Carlin
17	Sebastian Montoya	Campos Racing
18	Brad Benavides	Carlin
19	David Vidales	Campos Racing
20	Kush Maini	MP Motorsport
21	Arthur Leclerc	PREMA Racing
22	Juan Manuel Correa	ART Grand Prix
23	Josep María Martí	Campos Racing
24	David Schumacher	Charouz Racing System
25	Francesco Pizzi	Charouz Racing System
26	Zak O'Sullivan	Carlin
27	Reece Ushijima	Van Amersfoort Racing
29	Federico Malvestiti	Jenzer Motorsport
29	László Tóth	Charouz Racing System
30	Nazim Azman	Hitech Grand Prix

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