

Friday 3 March 2023

Bortoleto heads Minì in opening Sakhir session

Gabriel Bortoleto began his 2023 Formula 3 campaign in fine form, topping the timing sheets in the opening Free Practice session in Sakhir. The Brazilian looked right at home in his Trident car, setting a 1:47.775 to go 0.075s clear of Hitech Pulse-Eight's Gabriele Minì - in an all-rookie top two.

Taylor Barnard put his Jenzer Motorsport car into the P1 initially with a 1:49.712, 0.155s ahead of teammate Nikita Bedrin. Bedrin then took his own turn at the top of the order, knocking four tenths off the British driver's best effort.

As the clock approached 23 minutes remaining, a flurry of cars headed out of the pits to put their times on the board. Bortoleto swiftly became the driver to beat, clocking in a 1:48.395, 0.065s ahead of Alpine junior Minì.

Having set the pace in pre-season testing, Grégoire Saucy's speed seemed to carry over into the morning session. The ART Grand Prix driver looked to be up on Bortoleto's time in the opening sector but encountered traffic around the Bahrain International Circuit and slotted into third.

Bortoleto then set out to extend his advantage, breaking into the 1:47s for the first time – swiftly joined by Minì and Saucy. The trio remained comfortably out front to the chequered flag.

The final driver to be signed for the 2023 campaign, Luke Browning's late effort moved him into fourth for Hitech Pulse-Eight, 0.451s down on the leading Trident driver. Caio Collet's experience around the Sakhir circuit proved useful as the Brazilian slotted up into fifth, whilst Leonardo Fornaroli ensured two Trident cars inside the top six.

Paul Aron was the leading PREMA Racing driver in seventh, ahead of the returning Franco Colapinto for MP Motorsport, ART's Kaylen Frederick and PREMA's Zak O'Sullivan, who rounded out the top 10.

With track evolution expected to be a major factor in Qualifying, it'll be all to play for when the session gets underway at 4pm local time.

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2023 FIA FORMULA 3 CHAMPIONSHIP – ROUND 1 FREE PRACTICE PROVISIONAL CLASSIFICATION

	DRIVER	LICENCE	TEAM	LAPTIME
1	Gabriel Bortoleto	BRA	Trident	1:47.775
2	Gabriele Minì	ITA	Hitech Pulse-Eight	1:47.847
3	Grégoire Saucy	CHE	ART Grand Prix	1:47.966
4	Luke Browning	GBR	Hitech Pulse-Eight	1:48.226
5	Caio Collet	BRA	Van Amersfoort Racing	1:48.249
6	Leonardo Fornaroli	ITA	Trident	1:48.303
7	Paul Aron	EST	PREMA Racing	1:48.407
8	Franco Colapinto	ARG	MP Motorsport	1:48.418
9	Kaylen Frederick	USA	ART Grand Prix	1:48.436
10	Zak O'Sullivan	GBR	PREMA Racing	1:48.456
11	Sebastian Montoya	COL	Hitech Pulse-Eight	1:48.528
12	Josep María Martí	ESP	Campos Racing	1:48.572
13	Oliver Goethe	DEU	Trident	1:48.575
14	Rafael Villagómez	MEX	Van Amersfoort Racing	1:48.589
15	Hugh Barter	AUS	Campos Racing	1:48.646
16	Christian Mansell	GBR	Campos Racing	1:48.694
17	Dino Beganovic	SWE	PREMA Racing	1:48.730
18	Jonny Edgar	GBR	MP Motorsport	1:48.773
19	Nikita Bedrin	ITA	Jenzer Motorsport	1:48.926
20	Mari Boya	ESP	MP Motorsport	1:49.019
21	Nikola Tsolov	BGR	ART Grand Prix	1:49.044
22	Taylor Barnard	GBR	Jenzer Motorsport	1:49.048
23	Ido Cohen	ISR	Rodin Carlin	1:49.124
24	Hunter Yeany	USA	Rodin Carlin	1:49.181
25	Tommy Smith	AUS	Van Amersfoort Racing	1:49.274
26	Sophia Flörsch	DEU	PHM Racing by Charouz	1:49.347
27	Oliver Gray	GBR	Rodin Carlin	1:49.389
28	Alejandro García	MEX	Jenzer Motorsport	1:49.443
29	Piotr Wisnicki	POL	PHM Racing by Charouz	1:49.577
30	Roberto Faria	BRA	PHM Racing by Charouz	1:50.519

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