

Ugochukwu takes pole position at Macau Grand Prix – FIA FR World Cup

McLaren junior driver Ugo Ugochukwu has claimed pole position for the Macau Grand Prix – FIA FR World Cup Qualification Race after a dramatic qualifying session on Friday that featured seven red flags. The American, who drives for the R-ace GP team, edged out MP Motorsport's Oliver Goethe by just 0.014 seconds as the pair traded the top spot right at the end.

Speaking about his performance, Ugochukwu said: "That was the most intense qualifying session I have ever had. It was really hard to know where the limit was, but having to just push it more and more every lap. I'm super happy – especially on such a special circuit."

Goethe had managed to hold on to second place despite some drama midway through the session when he accidentally triggered the fire extinguisher in his cockpit – which prompted a big clean up by his mechanics so he could get back out on track. Mexican Noel León was third quickest, with his KCMG IXO by Pinnacle Motorsport team having repaired his car from his morning crash with just minutes to spare.

Qualifying was the first time that the FR cars had run in the dry so far this weekend, which meant drivers had to judge perfectly the risk factor in terms of pushing hard without going over the limit. But some were better able to do that, with a host of drivers hitting trouble, and others being caught up in accidents by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Rintaro Sato caused the first red flag after eight minutes when he hit the barriers at Post 15 Bend, and he was collected by the SJM Theodore Prema Racing duo of Alex Dunne and Dino Beganovic – with the latter having been quickest at that point. Shortly after the restart, Tuukka Taponen caused another red flag when he crashed at Post 15 Bend, while Jin Nakamura later caused a stoppage when he was caught up in an incident at the final corner. The fourth red flag was brought out shortly after the restart due to barrier repairs being needed.

Further stoppages were caused by Rikuto Kobayashi crashing at Fishermen's Bend, with the sixth red flag being caused by James Wharton crashing his ART Grand Prix car at Moorish Hill and being collected by his team-mate Evan Giltaire. The final red flag, which brought the session to an end, was caused by Jett Bowling going off at the final corner.

Macau Grand Prix Organising Committee

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