

# ANTÓNIO FÉLIX DA COSTA SECURES PROVISIONAL POLE FOR MACAU GRAND PRIX

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Portuguese F3 returnee António Félix da Costa (Carlin) is on provisional pole position for the 63th Suncity Group Formula 3 Macau Grand Prix – FIA Formula 3 World Cup. In Thursday's first qualifying, the BMW works driver, who is making his comeback in Formula 3 as a one-off for the event, posted a lap time of 2m11.535s around the 6.12 kilometres long Guia street circuit. Thus, the winner of the 2012 Macau Grand Prix ended up ahead of Callum Iott (Van Amersfoort Racing, 2m11.761s), who became the best-placed regular from this year's FIA Formula 3 European Championship. Swedish driver Felix Rosenqvist (SJM Theodore Racing by Prema, 2m11.797s), the 2015 FIA Formula 3 European Champion and a two-time Macau F3 race winner in 2014 and 2015, ended up third from reigning Japanese F3 champion Kenta Yamashita (ThreeBond with T-Sport, 2m11.797s). The final grid positions for Saturday's qualifying race will be known after tomorrow's second qualifying (15.55-16.35 hrs local time CST - UTC/GMT +8 hours), with the fastest lap for each driver from any of the two sessions to determine the results.

## FREE PRACTICE: ROSENQVIST ON TOP

At 9.35 am, Formula 3 cars took to the track for the first time during this year's Macau Grand Prix for 40 minutes of free practice. Reigning Japanese Formula 3 champion Kenta Yamashita proved to be on the pace early on, but twelve minutes into the session, a crash by Ferdinand Habsburg (Fortec Motorsports)

at Fisherman's Bend brought the red flags out. It took 17 minutes for the Austrian's stranded car to be recovered and for the barriers to be put back in place. The duration of the session was extended by another five minutes to provide the drivers with some more track time.

Action resumed with 15 minutes on the clock and some new names turned up at top of the timing screens: Felix Rosenqvist, Lando Norris (Carlin), Callum Iott (Van Amersfoort Racing) and António Félix da Costa (Carlin) each were on top for a while before Yamashita became the first driver to post a sub 2m14s lap time, but in the remaining three minutes, Callum Iott and Felix Rosenqvist toppled his time. Eventually, Rosenqvist ended up fastest with a time of 2m13.099s, a little over four tenth of a second faster than Iott while Yamashita was classified third. Briton Lando Norris (Carlin) was the best-placed Macau novice in fifth behind 2011 Macau race winner Daniel Juncadella (Hitech GP).

## **QUALIFYING: ANTÓNIO FÉLIX DA COSTA CLAIMS PROVISIONAL POLE IN A DISRUPTED SESSION**

While free practice still was a relatively uneventful session – at least by Macau standards – with only one red flag, first qualifying provided considerably more action with no less than four interruptions. Red flags flew for the first time five minutes into the session after a wheel had come off Kenta Yamashita's car. At this time, António Félix da Costa was already on top with a time of 2m13.251s, but there was more to come from him and all the other drivers in the 29-strong field. Some eight minutes after action had resumed, red flags were out again due to Alexander Sims's car (Double R Racing) having stopped on track in the run to Lisboa. Félix Da Costa had already improved to 2m12.151s with Arjun Maini and Lando Norris also having taken brief spells in the lead.

Two separate crashes by Lando Norris coming out of San Francisco and Joel Eriksson in the twisty section between Teddy Yip and Paiol were the reason for the third red flag that came out with twelve minutes remaining. At that moment, Félix da Costa was down to a time of 2m11.535s. The final red flag came out with 2m42s on the clock after Daniel Juncadella had crashed into the barriers at Fisherman's.

After that, the session wasn't restarted and thus, António Félix da Costa secured provisional pole position for Saturday's Formula 3 qualifying race, followed by Iott, Rosenqvist, Yamashita and the unfortunate Juncadella. Behind Motopark driver Sérgio Sette Câmara in sixth, Lando Norris ended up as the best-placed Macau rookie in first qualifying, while Nick Cassidy (SJM Theodore Racing by Prema), Jake Hughes and Sam MacLeod (Fortec Motorsports) rounded out the top ten.

Tomorrow, Formula 3 action at Macau continues with another free practice session from 9.35 till 10.15 hrs local time (CST – UTC/GMT +8 hours) and second qualifying from 15.55 till 16.35 hrs local time (CST – UTC/GMT +8 hours).

**António Felix da Costa:** “It was good fun – a lot of fun!! The car wasn’t so good this morning I have to say. I adapted well to the track, but the car was super hard to drive. However, we managed to fix it. So qualifying was good fun, it worked well on the used and the new tyres. I could push and I still think I have some potential. It was quite a disrupted session, there were a few laps when I was going quicker and then the red flag came out, but that was the same for everyone. So luckily everything went well for us and I am happy with the result.”

**Callum Iloft:** “Qualifying was a little messy. With all the red flags and the additional dirt on the track it was quite hard to get into a rhythm. I really only had one lap, but I got a good one in when I needed it. Every time when I was on a quicker lap the red flag would come out, so it was a bit frustrating. However, I am happy with second. I would like to be P1 of course and I think I have it in me, but all in all it was a good session.”

**Felix Rosenqvist:** “It was an okay session. The tyres are obviously new for everyone, so we need to adjust to them. We waited quite a while to put a new set on and then did one lap, but unfortunately the session got red flagged at that time. So after the red flag the peak of the tyre was not really there anymore. We did one lap which was a big improvement and after all I think we are quite good. We look pretty fast and there is no reason to worry. But I think the main key this year will be the tyres.”