

LANDO NORRIS CLAIMS PROVISIONAL POLE POSITION IN MACAU

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Reigning FIA Formula 3 European Champion Lando Norris (Carlin, 2m11.570s) claimed provisional pole position for the 64th running of the Suncity Group Macau Grand Prix – FIA F3 World Cup. In first qualifying at the 6.210 kilometres long Guia street circuit in China's Special Administrative Region, the Carlin driver had an advantage of almost one second over the rest of the field, led by Pedro Piquet (Van Amersfoort Racing, 2m12.482s). In a disrupted session that saw the red flags out four times and was not resumed after the final interruption, Maximilian Günther (SJM Theodore Racing by Prema, 2m12.619s) came third and Daniel Ticktum (Motopark with VEB, 2m13.317s) finished fourth, thus making it four different teams on the first four places.

On the opening day of action for this year's Macau Grand Prix – FIA F3 World Cup, two Formula 3 sessions were scheduled with 40 minutes of free practice in the morning and another 40 minutes for first qualifying in the afternoon. Free practice ended with a clean sweep of the top three for the German Motopark with VEB team with Formula 3 returnee Sérgio Sette Câmara (Motopark with VEB, 2m14.808s) on top followed by his Swedish team-mate Joel Eriksson (Motopark with VEB, 2m14.916s), the runner-up of this year's FIA Formula 3 European Championship, and British driver Daniel Ticktum (Motopark with VEB, 2m14.0995s). Pedro Piquet (Van Amersfoort Racing, 2m15.085s) was classified fourth as the best-placed non-Motopark driver. In a nearly incident-free session, the

only drivers to have contact with the barriers were Jehan Daruvala (Carlin, 2m17.449s) and 'Dragon' aka Ryuji Kumita (B-Max Racing Team, 2m30.009s), but free practice could be completed as scheduled.

Qualifying, however, was an entirely different affair. Red flags flew after a few minutes already after 'Dragon' aka Ryuji Kumita (B-Max Racing Team, no recorded lap time) had crashed into the tyres stacks at San Francisco. Once his car had been recovered, action restarted, but after less than two minutes, another off by Alex Palou (ThreeBond Racing with Dorago Corse, 2m17.992s) stopped play again. After the restart, several drivers took turns at the top of the timing screens, with reigning FIA Formula 3 European Champion Lando Norris being the first to post a sub 2m14s lap time. Then, with eleven minutes and 29 seconds remaining, red flags were out once more after a head-on impact by Sérgio Sette Câmara (Motopark with VEB, 2m13.884s) at Fisherman's. There was a lot of debris on track and the barrier was affected, too, which led to an interruption of over 45 minutes. Maximilian Günther (SJM Theodore Racing by Prema, 2m12.619s) was in first place at that time.

Lap times dropped considerably after the track had been cleared and action resumed. Lando Norris came out on top with a time of 2m11.570s, 0.912 seconds ahead of Pedro Piquet, who was on good form. Behind Maximilian Günther, Daniel Ticktum, Joel Eriksson (Motopark with VEB, 2m13.637s) and stalwarts Yuki Sekiguchi (B-Max Racing Team, 2m13.683s) and Callum Iott (SJM Theodore Racing by Prema, 2m13.739s), Frenchman Sacha Fenestraz (Carlin, 2m13.818s) was the best-placed Macau novice in eighth place. Sérgio Sette Câmara and Chinese crowds' favourite Guanyu Zhou (SJM Theodore Racing by Prema, 2m14.055s) rounded out the top ten.

Due to the fact that the car of Yuki Sekiguchi of B-Max Racing Team did not comply with the bodywork flexibility test following the technical examination after the session, he has been disqualified from the results of the first qualifying. All drivers qualified behind Sekiguchi move up by one position, with Kenta Yamashita (B-Max Racing Team, 2m14.281s) now inheriting tenth place.

Lando Norris: "That was quite good. We were struggling a bit to find pace, not really in one particular part of the track, but more a combination of little things. We had two new tyres and I don't think many other people did, so that was an advantage for us today, but a disadvantage tomorrow. It is hard to say where we are compared to the others, but I don't think we are the best at the moment."