

Friday, 17 July 2020

Smolyar seals first ever F3 pole in wet-dry Qualifying

Alex Smolyar was phenomenal around the Hungaroring in today's wet-dry Qualifying session, taking his maiden pole position in FIA Formula 3. The Russian finished 0.2s ahead of PREMA's Logan Sargeant, with his ART Grand Prix teammate Théo Pourchaire in third.

Qualifying had been suspended earlier in the day due to heavy rain, but the eventual session was well worth the wait. Smolyar was the first man out onto a still damp track, with a noticeable amount of spray firing from the rear end of his ART machine.

The Russian wasn't messing about, setting the first fast lap, before beating it by 1.6s. Sebastián Fernández dived in beneath him, but couldn't get close to his teammate's pace. Championship leader Oscar Piastri enjoyed more luck in that regard, setting two purple sectors to take provisional pole from Smolyar by a massive margin of 1.3s.

Not that the ART driver was fazed. He responded emphatically to return to first by 0.1s. Sargeant and Liam Lawson crossed the line not long after, but could only haul themselves to third and fourth.

F3's newest race winner, Théo Pourchaire, saw his own attempt fall short. The Frenchman set solid first and final sectors but couldn't find the pace in the middle part of the track and sat fifth. Smolyar was in a league of his own, and bettered his own time yet again to increase his margin to 0.6s.

The track had dried significantly by this point and enough time remained for two final laps. Sargeant looked to have made the most of his to steal provisional pole from Smolyar by 0.012s.

Yet, once again, the Russian responded with another phenomenal tour of the Hungaroring. His first and second sectors were so strong that he was able to slip up in the third and still take pole from Sargeant by two tenths.

The American was unable to respond and settled for second, with Pourchaire getting in a final tour good enough for third. Frederik Vesti took fourth late on, ahead of Jenzer's Calan Williams. Piastri, Fernández, Richard Verschoor, Bent Viscaal and Dennis Hauger completed the top ten.

Smolyar will be looking for a first win in F3 in Race 1 tomorrow, which gets underway at 10.25am local time.

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