

Saturday 12 September 2020

### **Vesti scores third F3 win, as title fight goes down to the wire**

PREMA's Frederik Vesti won for the second time in as many rounds by taking an emphatic FIA Formula 3 Race 1 victory over Jake Hughes in Mugello. It wasn't enough to keep the Dane in title contention though, with the battle for the crown now a three-way fight between Oscar Piastri, Logan Sargeant and Théo Pourchaire.

Vesti started the day sixth in the standings, knowing that only a victory and the fastest lap would be enough to remain in the title battle. He clinched the win, but missed out on the extra two points, meaning he is now out of contention by just half a point.

Pourchaire claimed the final podium position to keep his own title bid alive and set up a final race brawl between himself and the PREMA duo of Sargeant and Piastri.

Sargeant spent most of the race in fifth place and in possession of first in the standings, with Championship leader Piastri lingering just outside the points. However, the American was thwarted by Enzo Fittipaldi, who scored his best finish in F3. The HWA driver stole fifth from the PREMA racer in the dying laps, dropping Sargeant back to second, but level on points with Piastri.

Liam Lawson and David Beckmann join Vesti in falling out of title contention. Eighth place wasn't enough for the German, while Lawson only took a point, finishing 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **AS IT HAPPENED**

Zendeli had no problems getting off the line, coolly peeling away from Hughes. The HWA RACELAB driver got away cleanly, but couldn't match the pace of the Trident down the straight.

Sargeant knew that he had a strong package in Mugello, having qualified second on track, but started from P5 on the grid following a grid drop penalty from Round 8. The American made light work of the race start, instantly gaining a place from Fittipaldi, as the Brazilian slipped down to sixth behind Pourchaire.

With Piastri starting from 16<sup>th</sup>, due to his own grid penalty, Sargeant knew that he had a fantastic opportunity to leapfrog his teammate in the standings but needed to balance risk versus reward. So, when Pourchaire challenged him for fourth, he thought better of fighting too hard and the Frenchman pulled ahead of him at the first turn of the second lap.

### **CONTINUES**

Piastrri would have hoped to gain a few places himself in the opening laps but got caught up behind Matteo Nannini. He eventually flashed past the Jenzer Motorsport man, and from there he fizzed ahead of Alex Peroni and Dennis Hauger for P13.

The battle for first place was heating up as Zendeli struggled to get out of DRS range from Hughes. The duo were fighting for seventh in the Drivers' standings, but Hughes only had eyes on the race win, saying in yesterday's press conference: "I'm not interested in P7 or P8 - it doesn't really matter to me. I came here for a lot more than that."

The HWA man pulled alongside Zendeli at the entry to Turn 1, but the two touched tyres and wobbled slightly. They remained on the tarmac with Zendeli clinging on to the lead.

Hughes attempted a near identical move at the same place two laps later and this time was successful. Zendeli couldn't defend against the DRS advantage, as the Briton angled his HWA around the outside of him to dive past.

The battle was far from over. Zendeli fought back and darted through at the first corner to reclaim first. The German hung on for another four laps, before Hughes got ahead again.

There was plenty going on behind them too. Sargeant and Pourchaire went wheel-to-wheel in the fight for fourth. The American briefly got past the ART driver, but was then out-braked into the first turn, surrendering the position to the Frenchman once more.

Vesti had been keeping pace with the front two, patiently biding his time and waiting for any potential mistakes. He got his chance when Zendeli fell out of DRS range from Hughes, and didn't need a second invitation, using the advantage to fly past at Turn 1.

Within a lap, Vesti had caught up with the race leader and was hounding the back of the HWA man. The Dane's earlier patience was paying off, and with better tyres he was able to fling his PREMA down the side of Hughes and into first place.

Hughes made a late attempt to reclaim first, but Vesti hung on at the line by three tenths of a second. Behind their battle, the Championship fight had been continuing to bubble. Pourchaire grabbed third place in the closing laps as Zendeli dropped to fourth.

Sargeant fell to sixth behind Fittipaldi, with Alex Smolyar holding on to P7. Beckmann claimed eighth, ahead of Sebastián Fernández.

Piastrri had managed to fire up to 11<sup>th</sup> in the order but could not get ahead of Liam Lawson for the final points position.

**CONTINUES**

Piastrri and Sargeant are now tied on 160 points in the battle for the crown, with the Australian only ahead on countbacks. Pourchaire is nine points behind in third place. Vesti is fourth, ahead of Lawson and Beckmann, with the trio all now out of title contention.

In the Teams' standings, champions PREMA are first on 462.5 points, ahead of Trident on 249.5 and ART Grand Prix on 237. Hitech Grand Prix are fourth, ahead of HWA.

### **KEY QUOTE – FREDERIK VESTI (PREMA RACING)**

"We won a crazy race with really high degradation. It was really difficult to manage throughout the race. On the last lap, I passed for the lead after a great battle with Jake Hughes.

"I am really happy to win and it is great points for the Championship. We now have three Race 1 wins from the season and I am really happy. A big thanks to PREMA and all of my partners."

### **WHAT'S NEXT?**

Lawson may be out of the running for first, but the Kiwi will start from reverse grid pole in Race 2 on Sunday and could mathematically still take third in the Championship.

Starting from fifth on the reverse grid, Sargeant is the highest placed of the title contenders, as Pourchaire will line up in seventh, and Piastrri P11.

**ENDS**