

Friday 26 July, 2024

Browning sets the pace amid mixed conditions in Spa-Francorchamps

Hitech Pulse-Eight driver Luke Browning left it until the final moments of the session to top the Spa-Francorchamps Free Practice that started with rainy conditions before ending in the dry.

Browning completed a lap of 2:15.570 with his last lap on the slick tyres to finish 0.030s ahead of Van Amersfoort Racing's Noel León, with ART Grand Prix driver Christian Mansell in third.

A wet Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps greeted the drivers with Browning the early pacesetter on a 2:22.089, putting him 0.683s clear of his ART title rival Mansell in second.

As the drivers rounded the track, they began to find more grip and pace, but no one could quite match Browning's time, with VAR's León going closest, two-tenths behind.

But the Hitech driver continued to be the benchmark and later completed a lap of 2:21.310 to improve on his earlier effort, as AIX Racing's Nikita Bedrin followed him across the line to finish 0.620s off the top time.

Several drivers then returned to the pit lane but the ART cars of Mansell, Laurens van Hoepen and debutant Tuukka Taponen all stayed out, as the former went to within 0.7s off the top time in second.

Van Hoepen was just another two-tenths behind in third, while Taponen impressed early on in P6.

With 20 minutes left in the session, the sun had started to come through and the track was drying out. The teams then started sending their drivers out for some exploratory laps on the slicks.

But it was not until the final six minutes that a dry line began to appear with MP Motorsport's Alexander Dunne using that to great effect to go fastest with 2:20.474 - 0.008s ahead of his teammate Tim Tramnitz.

Times continued to tumble as track conditions improved with Sebastián Montoya, Santiago Ramos, León, Arvid Lindblad, Leonardo Fornaroli and Tramnitz all topping the timesheets within the span of five minutes.

The drivers running was then hampered by a yellow flag in the final sector following Ramos' spin at the bus stop chicane, while his Trident teammate Sami Meguetounif would run wide at the same corner.

Eventually, it was Browning who ended in the top spot thanks to his time of 2:15.570, ahead of León by 0.30s. Mansell wound up third ahead of the MP cars of Dunne and Kacper Sztuka.

Van Hoepen finished sixth fastest ahead of Montoya with Tramnitz in P8, Fornaroli in P9 as Martinius Stenshorne rounded out the top 10.

The drivers now have a few hours to look over the data before returning to the track for Qualifying later today at 15:05 local time.

CONTINUES

2024 FIA FORMULA 3 CHAMPIONSHIP – ROUND 9 FREE PRACTICE PROVISIONAL

CLASSIFICATION

	DRIVER	LICENCE	TEAM	LAPTIME
1	Luke Browning	GBR	Hitech Pulse-Eight	2:15.570
2	Noel Leon	MEX	Van Amersfoort Racing	2:15.600
3	Christian Mansell	AUS	ART Grand Prix	2:15.942
4	Alexander Dunne	IRL	MP Motorsport	2:16.022
5	Kacper Sztuka	POL	MP Motorsport	2:16.135
6	Laurens van Hoepen	NLD	ART Grand Prix	2:16.209
7	Sebastian Montoya	COL	Campos Racing	2:16.210
8	Tim Tramnitz	DEU	MP Motorsport	2:16.362
9	Leonardo Fornaroli	ITA	Trident	2:16.403
10	Martinius Stenshorne	NOR	Hitech Pulse-Eight	2:16.720
11	Mari Boya	ESP	Campos Racing	2:16.761
12	Tuukka Taponen	FIN	ART Grand Prix	2:16.969
13	Arvid Lindblad	GBR	PREMA Racing	2:17.098
14	Nikita Bedrin	ITA	AIX Racing	2:17.566
15	Gabriele Mini	ITA	PREMA Racing	2:17.592
16	Tasanapol Inthraphuvasak	THA	AIX Racing	2:17.619
17	Oliver Goethe	DEU	Campos Racing	2:17.729
18	Tommy Smith	AUS	Van Amersfoort Racing	2:18.030
19	Sophia Floersch	DEU	Van Amersfoort Racing	2:18.115
20	Max Esterson	USA	Jenzer Motorsport	2:18.156
21	Charlie Wurz	AUT	Jenzer Motorsport	2:18.257
22	Dino Beganovic	SWE	PREMA Racing	2:18.309
23	Joseph Loake	GBR	Rodin Motorsport	2:18.414
24	Matias Zagazeta	PEU	Jenzer Motorsport	2:19.395
25	Cian Shields	GBR	Hitech Pulse-Eight	2:19.479
26	Joshua Dufek	AUT	AIX Racing	2:19.913
27	Santiago Ramos	MEX	Trident	2:19.990
28	Piotr Wisnicki	POL	Rodin Motorsport	2:20.579
29	Callum Voisin	GBR	Rodin Motorsport	2:22.087
30	Sami Meguetounif	FRA	Trident	2:23.322

ENDS