



NORRIS TURNS UP THE TITLE PRESSURE

Piastri under pressure as Verstappen slips

Mexico City, Saturday October 25 – Lando Norris produced one of the finest laps of his career to claim pole position for Sunday's Mexico City Grand Prix at the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez, in which 146,132 gathered this Saturday, and set up a thrilling scenario for Mexico's 10th race of the modern era.

'Wow, what a lap!'

That was Norris's own reaction from the cockpit as a time of 1 minute 15.586 – an average speed of 204.990 km/h – gave him his first pole in Mexico, his fifth of the season and the 14th of his F1 career so far. "I don't know how I did that!" he added as he increased the pressure on teammate Oscar Piastri, who will start from a lowly seventh on the grid.

This is McLaren's first pole position in Mexico since Gerhard Berger topped Qualifying in 1990.

"I'm happy to be back on pole," Norris added. "It seems like it's been quite a long time, so a good feeling – it was one of those laps where I genuinely don't know what happened. I was very pleasantly surprised."

Norris has seized the initiative in the three-man race for the title, with Piastri facing an uphill battle on Sunday as he tries to protect his 14-point lead in the race for the drivers' title. Seventh would have been eighth but for Carlos Sainz's five-place grid penalty carried over from his fight with Kimi Antonelli in Texas last weekend. "All feels okay, just no pace, which is a bit of a mystery," said the 24-year-old Australian. "I would say, a bit frustrating..."

"I'm here to win," was Norris's way of summing it all up. "I'm expecting a battle, not expecting it to be easy. Eyes forward, let's see how much I can win by!" If he wins and Piastri is not in the top three, the Englishman will leave Mexico City with the Championship lead.

Ferraris flying at high altitude

"I'm pretty happy with the job we've done," said Charles Leclerc as he narrowly missed out on a third Mexican pole, but both Ferrari men were delighted with their efforts in keeping George Russell's Mercedes and Max Verstappen's Red Bull at bay. "I don't think there was much more left in the car, a bit here and there, as always in Qualifying, but I'm very happy with today's performance," added the Monaco driver who was on pole at AHR in 2019 and 2023. He is the only man to have set a faster pole-winning time in Mexico than Norris's this year.

Leclerc's best lap was a quarter of a second slower than Norris, and just 0.090s faster than teammate Lewis Hamilton, who is enjoying one of his strongest weekends in a scarlet car. "I'm honored to be up here with Charles and Lando," said the two-time Mexico winner. "You guys have been so quick all year, and it's an amazing feeling, the first time I've been close enough for the top three in Qualifying this year, and the team truly deserve it. We're just working as hard as we can: we've not really moved the car forward necessarily in development, but we've extracted more from our processes this weekend and that's what you're seeing."



Mercedes in the mix: is Max?

Mercedes saw Russell qualify fourth-fastest and Antonelli sixth in another creditable performance in Mexico. The two are separated on the grid by Verstappen, who again complained of “No grip, front and rear” earlier in the day and could not summon the one-lap pace he showed on Friday. The Dutchman, 40 points behind Piastri, was never in contention for what would have been his second Mexican pole. “I knew already from Q1 in the first run that it was not going to be it,” he admitted. “We’ve tried so many things and it’s just not been good.” Can he do anything from the third row? “There is no real recovery race when you have no pace,” he said. “I need people to retire in front of me to go ahead.”

Haas on a Mexico City high

Ollie Bearman will start 10th on the grid after another eye-catching day in the Haas. Only 17th in P3, the 20-year-old Englishman was consistently quick throughout Qualifying. He briefly led Q1, with teammate Esteban Ocon third at one stage as the American team relished the AHR conditions. While Ocon went out in Q2, Bearman held on, his last lap knocking out the second Red Bull of Tsunoda.

Rookies excel again

Is the pressure of chasing a Red Bull seat getting to Isack Hadjar? It looked that way in the third practice session when the young Frenchman lost his cool with two ‘idiots’ on track. Hadjar’s command of English was in colorful evidence when first a McLaren and then the Alpine of Pierre Gasly got in the way of his Racing Bulls, which was classified eighth in that session – but, crucially, again ahead of the Red Bull currently occupied by Yuki Tsunoda. His temper under control, in Qualifying Hadjar was the first driver into 1m 16s territory, in fact his 1:16.733 made it the first time a Racing Bulls had topped any Qualifying session in 2025.

FP3: best of British

The weekend’s final practice session was a British showcase as Norris, Hamilton and Russell topped the time sheet. Norris threw down the gauntlet for Qualifying after changes to the McLaren’s ride height left the title-chaser in a happier place. He was quickest in all three sectors to post a 1:16.633, three-tenths quicker than a confident-looking Hamilton and half a second ahead of Russell.

It was a typical FP3: some drivers – notably Verstappen – on-track early to check overnight set-up work, others biding their time. None more so than Fernando Alonso, whose session was reduced to just 12 laps as the Aston Martin mechanics chased a problem at the front right of the car.

After what he called ‘a messy FP2’, Piastri got his McLaren into fifth spot behind Leclerc’s Ferrari, the scarlet cars showing their Austin pace was no flash in the pan.

Verstappen’s early work didn’t help: with just two minutes of the session left, the World Champion radioed in to say, “Yeah, no grip, front and rear,” as he slithered to sixth place.



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