

Mexico City, November the 1st 2015

## Nico wins the race, México wins the day

Nico Rosberg became the first Mexican Grand Prix winner of the 21<sup>st</sup> century after a controlled victory from Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodrigo on Sunday – but México herself won the hearts and minds of Formula 1 fans around the world on a colourful and completely convincing return to the Grand Prix world.

Rosberg gave a cool and confident performance on a stage made special by the warmth of F1's reception in México. From the drivers' parade in classic cars to the colour and movement of the pre-race ceremony, the country demonstrated its fervour for F1, bringing smiles back to the faces of first-time visitors and those who remembered it well.

Third for Williams was Valtteri Bottas, making it three Mercedes-powered cars on the podium, while local hero Sergio Pérez delivered on his promise to his compatriots at the track – all 134,850 of them – by fighting all the way to claim eighth place in his Force India Mercedes.

The highlight for home fans came when Pérez passed Carlos Sainz's Toro Rosso in the stadium, producing the biggest roar of a noisy day. The 25-year-old went on to demonstrate his famous tyre management skills as he made just one stop and fought off Max Verstappen's Toro Rosso in the closing stages.

'Amazing, amazing!' said Rosberg after his fourth win of the season, surveying the huge crowd from the podium in the baseball stadium. 'This is really the best podium of the year – absolutely awesome!'

'It's fantastic to be back in México,' added Hamilton. 'I've never seen a crowd like this!' We had been asking if the Silver Arrows might get in each other's way at the start of the 71-lap race and let Sebastian Vettel push his Ferrari into the lead. It didn't happen: Rosberg and Hamilton held station on the way into Turn 1, while contact with the Red Bull Renault of Daniel Ricciardo left Vettel with a puncture and an unscheduled pit stop. In the end neither Ferrari would make it to the line – the first double failure for the Scuderia since Australia in 2006. Vettel had an uncharacteristically ragged day, spinning at Turn 8 on lap 18, running off-track in a failed attempt to pass Pastor Maldonado's Lotus Mercedes at Turn 1, and finally coming to grief at Turn 7 after 51 laps.

'I crashed, I'm OK, I'm sorry,' said Vettel, who slipped back to third overall in the drivers' championship and is now 21 points behind Rosberg with only two races remaining.

Earlier in the race Kimi Raikkonen in the other Ferrari had come off second-best in a clash with Bottas's Williams, fighting back against his compatriot's attack as Raikkonen's right rear wheel rolled over his left front.

'Overall a really good race,' said Bottas after his second podium finish of the season. 'A lot happening, but it ended up well.' Of the Raikkonen incident – his second clash with

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Kimi in three races – he added: ‘We’re racing hard – usually there’s enough room for two cars but this time there wasn’t, and of course I wasn’t going to back off.’ His determination also carried him past Raikkonen into fourth place in the drivers’ standings.

Vettel’s accident brought the Safety Car out to neutralise the race for six laps, closing the field up and making Rosberg the target when the race resumed. But the German coolly responded, retained the lead and was never troubled on the way to the 12<sup>th</sup> win of his F1 career.

Practice had suggested the Red Bulls might challenge the Mercedes pair, but the two Dan’s, Kvyat and Ricciardo, were never able to threaten the Silver Arrows’ supremacy. Instead it was Bottas who came through for third, with teammate Felipe Massa behind the Red Bulls in sixth place.

Nico Hulkenberg beat teammate Pérez to the line in seventh, with Verstappen’s Toro Rosso and the Lotus of Romain Grosjean rounding out the points-scorers.

Of the 20 starters, 16 were classified – but one of them did not make it to the end of the first lap. Fernando Alonso reported ‘Race over, lack of power’ from his McLaren Honda’s cockpit and pitted immediately to retire the car, while teammate Jenson Button, starting from the back of the grid, came through to finish 14th.

Many had feared the circuit could prove a car-breaker, but those fears proved unfounded: Alonso’s engine woes were well known before the race began, the two Ferraris came unstuck on their own, and only Felipe Nasr’s Sauber Ferrari succumbed to the local conditions when his rear brakes overheated and forced the Brazilian to park the car soon after the Safety Car went in.

México, however, was the real winner, and Rosberg himself was quick to point that out. The event was, he said, ‘an amazing success for Formula 1.’

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