

Mexico City 27 October 2016.

## SEB SETS THE PACE AS FERRARI FIGHT BACK

That's Lewis Hamilton describing the flying Sebastian Vettel during today's second Formula 1 free practice. Main talking-points from session 2:

### Ferrari going all-out?

Two years ago Ferrari went through a whole season without winning a race: could it happen again? Here we are at Round 19 of 21 and they still haven't added to their tally of 224 F1 victories; not only that, there hasn't been a Ferrari driver on the podium since Monza five races ago. But Sebastian Vettel's Friday pace looks good. The four-time champion topped the session on 1:19.790, a time set on Supersoft tyres half an hour into the 90-minute session. Hamilton had two tries at matching the German but came up four-thousandths of a second short and radioed to his Mercedes team: 'That Ferrari looks very quick...'

### The long and the short of it

FP2 is traditionally split between qualifying simulations on softer compounds, to test out pure speed, and long runs on harder compounds to check durability and race pace. Vettel went fastest on Pirelli's Supersofts, being used for the first time here, while several drivers racked up more than 40 laps as they tested the Mediums. Manor's Pascal Wehrlein, though, managed an impressive 33 laps on a set of the yellow-striped Softs. Last year México's Sergio Pérez managed to coax 53 laps from one set of Mediums: how long will they last this time? Checo finished the session in 15<sup>th</sup> place, suggesting he was looking for longevity rather than sheer speed.

### Kimi not keen to keep going

If Ferrari teammate Vettel was flying, Kimi Raikkonen was reluctant to keep pounding around the track late in the session as the long runs continued. 'I'd rather do starts than just drive around,' complained the Finn – but it wasn't until five minutes before the session ended that he was allowed to do so. Kimi did 37 laps. Seb was both quick and persistent: he did the highest total of 47.

### Rosberg on the back foot?

Championship leader Nico Rosberg was third-fastest in FP2 behind both Vettel and, more importantly for him, Mercedes teammate Hamilton. First of all, might Ferrari be a fly in the ointment and actually help Lewis put distance between himself and Nico? And secondly, what can Rosberg do? Mercedes have had some flaky race starts this year and Rosberg was concerned about his practice efforts. Hamilton reported his was 'good', Rosberg asked to repeat because 'That one felt under-engaged'. A sign of concern?

### Gruelling session for Haas

Mexico's Esteban Gutiérrez finished the session in 22<sup>nd</sup> place but racked up 33 laps in the process, which was 19 more than his Haas teammate Romain Grosjean could manage. After one installation lap the French driver's car was up on the jacks being 'investigated', as the team put it, for an electrical issue. It took an hour to fix and Grosjean finished the session in 20<sup>th</sup> place.

### Radios run hot!

There were some interesting scenarios on the airwaves as a few drivers vented their frustration over their radios. 'This guy has no brain, it's clear!', for example: that was Carlos Sainz letting off steam after taking longer than he wanted to get past Renault's Kevin Magnussen. More

amusingly still, Sebastian Vettel was heard to moan, 'What an idiot' – and the man driving the car ahead was two-time world champion Fernando Alonso in his McLaren!

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