

F1 – Vettel Takes Seventh Pole of the Season in India



Sebastian Vettel yesterday demonstrated that his team mate Mark Webber's surprise pole in Suzuka was nothing more than an anomaly as he cruised to take first place on the grid for the Indian Grand Prix. Vettel will be crowned world champion today if he finishes fifth or better, and by securing his seventh pole of the season he made this all but certain. Barring any exceptional or unforeseen circumstance, Vettel will be a four-time world champion by the end of the race.

That is not to say he will have everything entirely his own way, however. While the two Mercedes of Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton occupy second and third positions on the grid, they will start the race on the soft tyre, like Vettel. Fourth on the grid, on the other hand, is Mark Webber, the highest-placed qualifier to set his time on the medium compound tyre. The nature of the softer tyres means that they lose performance after only a few laps, and as such those drivers who start on them will be forced to pit early. This could mean drivers like Webber, Alonso, Perez and Button, who all qualified on the mediums, can push with a longer opening stint while the top three pit early and have to deal with traffic.

The surprise of the session was on-form Romain Grosjean being knocked out in Q1, only managing seventeenth position. Lotus tried to gamble by having him qualify on the medium tyres, hoping to save two sets of softs, but a couple of mistakes in his flying lap meant that the Frenchman lost out. His start from fourth on the grid in Japan saw him leapfrog the leaders and lead a significant part of the race, but this time around he will have his work cut out for him. Team mate Kimi Raikkonen had his best qualifying since Hungary and will start

sixth on the grid, but on the softer tyre.

Both Force Indias made it into Q2, with Paul di Resta starting the race in twelfth place, just ahead of his team mate Adrian Sutil. The result means that the qualifying head-to-head between these two drivers is now even, with eight each. Di Resta is still ten points ahead in the standings, and knows that he must remain in front of his team mate to have a chance of retaining his seat for next season. Speaking after qualifying, di Resta said he felt happy with the result: "I think we can be satisfied with the job we've done today. My lap in Q2 was very good, although I made a small mistake in the second to last corner, so I was maybe a couple of tenths away from the perfect lap. It definitely feels like we've made some progress recently and my confidence is growing with the way the car is working at the moment. Going into our home race we are only a couple of places away from points, so we're in the mix and if we can deliver the right strategy we should be able to come away with something."

At the back of the grid, Marussia driver Jules Bianchi out-qualified team mate Max Chilton and both Caterhams, giving his team a real chance at holding on to that important tenth spot in the Constructors' Championship.

Regarding the race, everything appears to be in Vettel's hands. With some interesting tyre strategies, the outcome of the race itself might not be predictable, but the confirmation of Vettel as world champion is almost inevitable.

Full Qualifying Results

- 1 Sebastian Vettel (1:24.119)
- 2 Nico Rosberg (+0.752)
- 3 Lewis Hamilton (+0.822)
- 4 Mark Webber (+0.928)
- 5 Felipe Massa (+1.082)
- 6 Kimi Raikkonen (+1.129)
- 7 Nico Hulkenberg (+1.215)

- 8 Fernando Alonso (+1.707)
- 9 Sergio Perez (+2.034)
- 10 Jenson Button (+2.368)
- 11 Daniel Ricciardo (Q2)
- 12 Paul Di Resta (Q2)
- 13 Adrian Sutil (Q2)
- 14 Jean-Eric Vergne (Q2)
- 15 Valtteri Bottas (Q2)
- 16 Esteban Gutierrez (Q2)
- 17 Romain Grosjean (Q3)
- 18 Pastor Maldonado (Q3)
- 19 Jules Bianchi (Q3)
- 20 Giedo van der Garde (Q3)
- 21 Charles Pic (Q3)
- 22 Max Chilton (Q3)