

F1 – Hamilton takes pole in wet Malaysian qualifying

Lewis Hamilton took his second pole position of the 2014 Formula 1 season in a rain-soaked qualifying session at the Malaysian Grand Prix to see him equal Jim Clark's record of 33 for a British driver.

A heavy downpour and stormy conditions meant that qualifying was delayed for 50 minutes, and the conditions on track made it difficult for the drivers. At the end of the session, it was almost impossible for the drivers to improve upon their previously-set times, and that meant that Hamilton's lap was just enough to see him start on pole position, edging Sebastian Vettel by 5/100ths of a second.

Hamilton's Mercedes team mate Nico Rosberg completed the top three, while the Ferraris of Fernando Alonso and Kimi Raikkonen were split by Daniel Ricciardo.

Most cars began Q1 on the intermediate tyres after the track began to lose the large stretches of standing water. The session passed without any major upsets or incidents until the closing minute, when rookie Marcus Ericsson spun and crashed, trailing debris across the track and causing the session to be red-flagged with half a minute to go.

There were more red-flags in Q2, when another rookie Daniil Kvyat struggled under braking in the slippery conditions and hit Alonso, breaking the Ferrari's front suspension and damaging his own front wing in the process.

As the time came for the top ten to challenge for pole position, McLaren decided to take a gamble with Jenson Button on the intermediate tyres, while the worsening conditions prompted everybody else to opt for wets. The decision didn't pay off, and Button struggled for grip and pace as he ended up

off the pace in 10th. Team mate Kevin Magnussen once again took advantage and managed to qualify in 8th, showing that his strong performance in Australia was not beginner's luck.

At the front of the grid it was Hamilton who managed to harness the wet conditions the best out of the challengers, and his early flying lap was enough to secure pole position ahead of Vettel. Rosberg struggled more than his team mate on the full wets, but still managed to take third on the grid ahead of Alonso.

Speaking after qualifying, Hamilton said:- "I'm all over the place at the moment. I'm really happy with how well we've done over the weekend, but today was incredible – how heavy was the rain?"

"It was tricky out there for everyone because at the end it was almost impossible to see. I couldn't see where the track went, where the corners were, where to brake. I had to bail out of my final fast lap, so it was very close."

After a disappointing race in Australia, where he also grabbed pole only to be forced to retire early in the race because of an engine problem, Hamilton is looking to put some points on the board in tomorrow's race.

"For myself and for the team, the priority is to bag as many points as possible," he said.

"We've got great a great opportunity, a great car and a team that is performing fantastically right now. Fingers crossed we can see ourselves through to the finish line."

Full Qualifying Results

- 1 HAMILTON 1:59.431
- 2 VETTEL (+0.055)
- 3 ROSBERG (+0.619)
- 4 ALONSO (+0.744)

5 RICCIARDO (+1.110)
6 RAIKKONEN (+1.787)
7 HULKENBERG (+2.281)
8 MAGNUSSEN (+2.782)
9 VERGNE (+3.647)
10 BUTTON (+4.622)

11 KVYAT (Q2)
12 GUTIERREZ (Q2)
13 MASSA (Q2)
14 PEREZ (Q2)
15 BOTTAS (Q2)
16 GROSJEAN (Q2)

17 MALDONADO (Q3)
18 SUTIL (Q3)
19 BIANCHI (Q3)
20 KOBAYASHI (Q3)
21 CHILTON (Q3)
22 ERICSSON (Q3)