

Beat: Sports

2016 Russian Grand Prix - Qualifying

Sochi

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USPA NEWS - Bittersweet afternoon for the Silver Arrows in Sochi. Nico today claimed his 24th pole position – his second at the Sochi Autodrom and second of the 2016 season. Nico's Q2 time of 1:36.119 was 1.776 seconds faster than the 2015 pole time. Lewis suffered a Power Unit failure during the out-lap.

Nico Rosberg -

That was a very strong Qualifying session for me behind the wheel today. I found a great rhythm in Q2, then just turned the front wing down a bit for Q3 and the balance was then absolutely perfect. This is a really rare feeling to have out there in the car, so thank you to the guys for making that happen. I was able to really nail the first lap in Q3 and was quite confident that it was quick enough, so I gave it everything and more on the second lap and had a huge lock up, which is why I abandoned that attempt.

I'm happy to have another pole – but tomorrow is a long race and a lot can happen. Even if we are looking strong pace-wise, I can never write off my opponents, that's for sure. They've had some bad luck once again this weekend – Sebastian with his gearbox issue and Lewis with his engine again. But we've seen in previous races that they are able to recover quickly and get through the field from behind. Let's see what tomorrow brings!

Lewis Hamilton -

It's obviously not a great feeling to be on the sidelines again – but that's life. I knew there was a problem and that it was probably the same failure that I had in China pretty much straight away. I went out for a second run in Q2 to get a feeler lap and felt the same power loss as last time. When it happened in Shanghai it was something we hadn't seen before and now unfortunately it's happened again, so we need to understand it.

I've never been superstitious about these things, though, and I never will be. There's nothing I can do about it, so I'll move on and look ahead to the race. I don't know where I'm going to start yet – we'll wait to see how that unfolds. But I never give up and I'll give it all I've got to recover whatever I can in the race, like always. It's not an easy track for overtaking. With the levels of tyre degradation and it being so tough to follow here, it's not going to be easy to make my way forward. But there are long straights and we've got good pace, so if I can keep the car in one piece I'll be fighting for decent points I'm sure.

Toto Wolff, Head of Mercedes-Benz Motorsport -

It's a bittersweet feeling after qualifying today. Nico took a dominant pole position and the car is really quick here. The team at the track has done a great job and the upgrades we brought are working well. But we didn't get to see the battle we had all hoped for after Lewis suffered a repeat of the failure he experienced in Shanghai.

It's so unfortunate for him after the problems he has already faced this season – and of course we have the concern that the same thing could happen again. But this is also part of motor racing. The Power Unit is a core element of performance and one of our biggest strengths. We are pushing hard to find lap time in every area and it's inevitable that sometimes you reach limits in that process. Lewis has handled everything so far this year with calm and professionalism. He is resilient and showing a great attitude, even though this is a tough time for him. For tomorrow, it's clear we are in a strong position in terms of performance. But like the saying goes, to finish first, first you have to finish!

Paddy Lowe, Executive Director (Technical) -

A great pole lap for Nico and our congratulations to him on a fantastic performance throughout the weekend so far. Unfortunately, however, our day has been tainted by a failure which deprived Lewis of a shot at pole – and deprived the fans of what would surely have been a thrilling climax to an immensely close battle between our two drivers.

We've let Lewis down for the second weekend in a row, so our apologies go to him once again. It's a cruel twist of fate that, out of eight Mercedes-Benz Power Units on the grid, the problem should befall the same driver twice. We've been working very hard over the past couple of weeks to understand what happened in China – but unfortunately there is clearly still more work to be done. Our

focus for the immediate future, however, is on making sure Lewis' car is in the best possible condition for tomorrow's race to give him the best chance of making the kind of strong recovery we've seen him pull off so many times in the past.

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