Beat: Sports

2020 Sakhir Grand Prix

Bahrain International Circuit

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USPA NEWS - A disappointing day of “what might have been“ for the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team at Sakhir

Valtteri finished the race in P8 after a chaotic pit-stop on Lap 62 during the late-race Safety Car period cost him time and positions

George led the race from the start, but was forced to make an additional pit-stop after having the wrong tyres fitted during the Lap 62 pit stop which cost him the lead of the race

After climbing back to P2, George suffered a left-rear puncture that forced a further stop and eventually battled his way back to P9, scoring a further point for fastest lap

Lewis (332 points) leads the Drivers´ Championship by 127 points from Valtteri (205 points), with George scoring his first ever points in Formula One today

The Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team (540 points) leads Red Bull Racing (282 points) by 258 points in the Constructors´ Championship

Valtteri Bottas

It´s been a really bad day for us. My start wasn´t great, I had some wheelspin and didn´t get a good getaway. George had a good start and could controlled the race from there. The beginning of my second stint looked quite promising, my pace was good and I started making up time on George. Without the Safety Car, I think George and I would have ended up having a nice battle towards the end. When we pitted under the Safety Car, there was some kind of mix up with the tyres and I ended up. I´m still not quite sure what happened, but I ended up leaving the pits on the same set of old Hard tyres that I was on before. That´s obviously not an ideal stop; you lose positions and don´t get fresh rubber, which then made it very tricky at the Safety Car re-start and I lost even more positions on the old tyres.

It´s always easy to criticise this afterwards but we´re all in this together and normally the team is really bullet proof in those situations. So we will take a good look at this internally and see what we can learn from it. George did a great job today and was just really unfortunate “ I think he could have otherwise won this race. Overall, it´s been a difficult day for the team, but we´ll be back on track in just a few days and I´ll give it everything to end the season on a high.

George Russell

I don´t quite know how to sum up the mixture of emotions I´m feeling at the moment. On the one hand, I´m proud of the job we did this weekend. I had a great group of people around me that was working very hard and diligently to get me prepared and ready for qualifying and the race. But today was absolutely gutting. I´ve had races before where I had a victory taken away from me, but it felt like that happened twice today, I still can´t quite believe it. I had everything under control after the start and was managing the race, looking after my tyres and keeping the gap to Valtteri. Then we had that mess-up during the pit stop, I think there were some issues with the comms. That put us on the back foot, but I think we still could have won. And then the car was starting to feel a bit funny; I didn´t want to believe it was a puncture, I just wanted to power through, but that obviously was not an option. I´m gutted, but also proud of what we have achieved and very happy to have had the opportunity to drive this car this weekend. Congratulations to Checo, he´s been around for a long time and is a great driver and deserves to have a victory on his tally.

Toto Wolff

Firstly, I want to say congratulations to Racing Point and Sergio on the victory, and Lance and Esteban for their podiums. It´s great to see a refreshing new podium and they did a brilliant job. Overall, we messed up in a major way today. Obviously, it was looking good

for us until the Safety Car running in a strong one-two, we were fine on the Hard tyre and could have stayed out, but we had the gap for a free stop and we took that opportunity. I think it was absolutely the right call, but it was a late one and we had a radio problem, which meant we didn´t have the right tyres in the box. Which is why George exited with the wrong tyres and Valtteri left the pits on the same tyres he´d arrived with.

Then we had to pit George again to correct the mistake. By then, the race was not lost and he battled back in an impressive way; but then he had the slow puncture and that dropped him back. These things can happen but obviously we need to investigate the problems, learn from them and move forward. It was heart-breaking for George after a monumental drive in his first race with Mercedes and he should have won. It didn´t work out today, but I´m sure this isn´t going to be his last attempt to win a race. For Valtteri, too, it was a difficult race and being on those old tyres at the end was hugely challenging. We´ll make sure we learn from this weekend and come back stronger in Abu Dhabi.

Andrew Shovlin

A frustrating result when we were looking very strong for a 1-2 finish and a win for George. The pitstop issues were linked to the way our radio system handles the priorities of messages which caught us out in a big way. As the safety car came out, we were calling for the crew to be ready, and for the tyres for each car to come into the pitlane. At the time that message was going out, another radio message for a very brief period prevented one of the key messages getting through to one set of tyre collectors. It´s something that´s been lurking in there and could have caught us out at any time over the past few seasons.

The ensuing problems were all a function of this single issue and certainly not the fault of anyone in our pit-crew who have done a great job all year. That obviously caused huge damage to both driver´s chances, both losing positions and Valtteri not even getting the fresh rubber we´d planned to fit. George did a great job fighting back through the field, but it was clear his bad luck wasn´t over when we spotted a slow puncture caused by debris in the final laps. We had no choice but to stop; however, he was determined to not give up and did a great job recovering into a points-scoring position and claiming fastest lap. We´ve still got some work to do unpicking the issues that caused our problems at the pit stop but we have time to do that properly before the next race and we´ll be going to Abu Dhabi focused on finishing the season with a good result.

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