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# Massa On Pole



The title is on the line and Felipe Massa has put himself in the best possible position to win Sunday's 71-lap Brazilian Grand Prix as he stormed to the pole position by over three-tenths of a second. As ever, the battle for the pole came down to the wire at the end of the final sessions and the Brazilian improved on his own best with a lap around the 4.309km circuit with an unbeatable 1:12.368s.

Jarno Trulli has run well all weekend in the leading Toyota, but the Italian veteran really pulled it all out on his final run to join Massa on the front row of the grid. Looking at the gap to team-mate Timo Glock, some 1.4 seconds, it is fairly safe to assume that Toyota has a very split fuel strategy and this will please the pole sitter.

Outgoing champion Kimi Raikkonen had a relatively trouble-free run to line up third in the second Ferrari but Lewis Hamilton made it hard work to join the Finn on the second row of the grid. Hamilton's penultimate run saw him make mistakes at both the second and fourth turn leaving him well down the order. The final lap saw gains from the championship leader but starting fourth makes it a tricky afternoon ahead even if he does not need to challenge Massa for the race win to become the world champion. Heikki Kovalainen ran well ahead of the pole position shoot out and starts fifth, less than a tenth shy of team-mate Hamilton.

Fernando Alonso made it 18 straight races that he has out-qualified his team-mate, and is the only driver in the field to achieve such a feat. The former champion set the pace in the second and third practice sessions, and lines up sixth for the final race of the season and could well still play a part in the outcome of the championship.

It has been a solid weekend again for the Toro Rosso Ferrari team completely showing the way to the Red Bull Renault team despite having effectively the same chassis. Sebastian Vettel, second fastest in the second round of qualifying, lines up alongside Alonso on the third row of the grid while Sebastien Bourdais starts behind the leading BMW Sauber of Nick Heidfeld in ninth position. Timo Glock rounds out the top ten for Toyota.

Nelson Piquet will be disappointed to start 11th in his first home Grand Prix. The Renault driver is under pressure from the team and may not retain the drive for next season. The rookie needs a strong race but in starting outside of the top ten, is at least the fastest driver who has a free choice on fuel strategy and that could be a factor on race day with rain predicted.

Red Bull Renault drivers Mark Webber and David Coulthard start 12th and 14th. For Webber, a sixth-row start will be a disappointment after showing good pace all through practice. Coulthard, running the white liveried RB4, is all set to make his final Grand Prix start in what has been a long and illustrious career.

Robert Kubica has looked sullen and dejected again this weekend and the reason is that he just cannot get any speed from his BMW Sauber. With team-mate Nick Heidfeld firmly in the top ten, the Canadian Grand Prix winner starts down in 13th position and that is the second straight Grand Prix he has failed to make the top ten in qualification.

In what may well be his last Grand Prix with Honda, Rubens Barrichello made it through into the second round of qualifying and will start the race from 15th position. It has been a late season surge from the Brazilian veteran who has comprehensively shown the way to team-mate Jenson Button in the latter stages of the season. This being Formula One, decisions are often taken well before the end of the season which may well be a shame for Barrichello...

Williams Toyota had expected to have a solid run in Brazil, but qualifying was a big disappointment for the Grove-based team. Both Kazuki Nakajima and Nico Rosberg failed at the first hurdle and did not make it into the second round of qualifying. Nakajima starts 16th with Rosberg in a dismal 18th with the second Honda of Jenson Button splitting the two. At the back, Giancarlo Fisichella got the better of Adrian Sutil in the private Force India battle for 19th position.

So we're all set for the season finale and rain is expected for much of the day at Interlagos. Two titles are still far from over.

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