



# SAUDI ARABIAN GRAND PRIX

JEDDAH CORNICHE CIRCUIT



## QUALIFYING

CHARLES LECLERC #16

OLIVER BEARMAN #38

P2

1'27"791

P11

1'28"642

*Weather: night, clear, dry. Temperatures: air 25°, track 30°*

## CHARLES ON THE FRONT ROW YET AGAIN, OLLIE SO CLOSE

# TO Q3

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Jeddah, 8 March 2024 – For the seventh successive race, Charles Leclerc has secured a place on the front row of the grid, this one for the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche circuit. And as was the case last week in the season-opener in Bahrain, he will have pole sitter Max Verstappen alongside him. In the second SF-24, Oliver Bearman starts from eleventh on the grid, an amazing achievement, as the team's reserve driver only got into the cockpit for the first time this morning, after Carlos Sainz had to withdraw from the event with appendicitis. The Spaniard was operated on this afternoon in Jeddah.

**A tough start.** Tomorrow, Bearman and Leclerc will be the youngest pairing ever to line up for the Scuderia and the first to be made up of graduates of the Maranello marque's Driver Academy. Oliver went into qualifying on the very tricky Saudi track with just 22 laps experience in the SF-24 from free practice 3. The 18 year old Englishman did a great job of getting to Q2 alongside Charles and missed the cut to Q3 by a whisker.

**Q2.** Oliver and Charles were both a bit unlucky as they had not been able to set a time before Nico Hulkenberg triggered a red flag. With a second set of new Soft tyres, the Englishman made a mistake so that everything depended on his second run, by which time tyre performance had dropped off very slightly. But he almost made it, 11<sup>th</sup> fastest in 1'28"642 just 36 thousandths slower than 10<sup>th</sup> placed Lewis Hamilton. He thus starts from the sixth row and scoring points tomorrow is therefore a realistic target.

**Q3.** In the top-ten shoot-out, Charles could count on two sets of new Soft tyres. On the first he was provisionally fourth in 1'28"272, and on the second he excelled himself to secure second place with a 1'27"791.

**Race.** The Grand Prix starts at 20 local tomorrow (18 CET). Charles' race pace seems solid and he can aim for a good result. Oliver's first task is to bring the car home, and maybe think about some points too.





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*I'm not fully satisfied with qualifying today and we will work on understanding the feeling I had during the sessions to be able to get all the potential out of the car in the future. I wish Carlos all the best for a speedy recovery and congratulations to Ollie, who is extremely talented and he showed it today on his first Formula 1 qualifying. He's done a lot of sim work which makes me happy to see that the prep he did back at the factory paid off as he was well prepared and extremely impressive today. I think between the two of us, we can bring home plenty of points tomorrow.*

**Charles Leclerc #16**



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*It's been a great day but it could have been even better. It wasn't the ideal way of making my F1 debut and of course I send all my best wishes to Carlos for a speedy recovery. But it's a great opportunity nevertheless. I would have liked to have come to quali with more than the 22 laps I did in FP3. But I can still be happy with today, even if Q2 was a bit messy. It was so close, but I made a mistake on my first push lap, so I had to do a second one and by then the tyres were no longer at their best. Now I'm ready to make the most of this opportunity tomorrow. I will focus on bringing the car home, although points would be nice. But it's*

*my first race on a really difficult track, so I can't expect too much.*

**Oliver Bearman #38**

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*It was a pretty good session, even if Max did a fantastic job at the beginning of Q3 and that pole time was a bit too far away for us. Charles' last attempt was very good and so he was able to secure P2 once again on the front row. Now with him, we have to focus on the race, we had good pace yesterday, so we need to have a good strategy and a clean race.*

*I'm also pleased with Oliver as it was not an easy day for him, jumping in the car at the last minute, as I only told him on the phone three hours before FP3. Managing to get to Q2, not far from making it to Q3 and on what is a very difficult track is pretty impressive. Even though he had so many things to manage he was not particularly nervous and it was an unforgettable experience for him. In FP3 we focused on doing pit stops and also worked on the starts, two aspects that will be important for him tomorrow. Let's see what he can achieve.*

**Frédéric Vasseur**

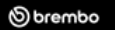
Team Principal

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