

Mexico City 28 October 2016.

## CHECO FOURTH-FASTEST AS SPEEDS RISE

Track action began today at the Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez with two Mexican drivers in Formula 1 Free Practice. Talking-points from session 1:

### Five seconds faster already!

Last year Max Verstappen topped the first practice session with a time of 1:25.990 for Toro Rosso. This year it's Lewis Hamilton who sits on top – with a best time of 1:20.914, already five seconds faster. Curiously, the time was set on Pirelli's Medium compound, so what might we see when the Supersofts – new for México in 2016 – really begin to take effect? Even more dramatically, the fastest speed overall – through the 'Speed Trap' on the main straight – was 366.3 km/h by Valtteri Bottas in the Williams, and that's already just one-tenth slower than the best we saw in 2015 from Pastor Maldonado's Lotus.

### Checo keeps Force India in front

Sergio Pérez made a fine start to his home weekend with fourth place overall in the Force India, just over a quarter of a second behind session leader Hamilton on 1:20.993. Not only that, but his Force India teammate Nico Hülkenberg was right behind him in fifth – a great start for the team trying to stay ahead of Williams in the Constructors' Championship. While Bottas was quick in a straight line, he could only finish sixth with teammate Felipe Massa – in his final Mexican Grand Prix – in ninth place. Force India lead by eight points in the race for fourth place overall.

### Good start for Esteban

Esteban Gutiérrez made a solid start to his first Mexican race with 15th place for Haas. His best time was 1:22.910, and like Pérez he completed 23 laps in the session. Gutiérrez is keen to impress not only his home fans but also his team as they decide on their 2017 driver line-up.

### Lewis on the front foot

Lewis Hamilton needs to reproduce his winning form from Texas to keep the pressure on Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg in the drivers' title race – and he has started well. Hamilton was three-quarters of a second ahead of Rosberg in the session, as the German complained of vibrations under braking. If Rosberg wins here, the Englishman must score at least a point to keep the championship alive.

### Red Bull running hot – but not the right way

Max Verstappen has been under fire recently for moving under braking – but he was almost on fire today when the rear brakes on his Red Bull ran extremely hot. The damage happened halfway through the session when the Dutch driver had done just 10 laps – and it was so extensive that he was unable to take any further part. Teammate Daniel Ricciardo, a podium finisher in Austin last week, was down in eighth so clearly there is work to do.

### Scary moment for Sauber

The biggest incident of the opening session came after 33 minutes when Felipe Nasr's Sauber lost the right half of its front wing at speed. It happened when the Brazilian ran wide over the kerb on the right, and seconds after the wing simply shattered. The session was red-flagged to allow marshals to clear away the considerable carbon-fibre debris. Nasr was able to rejoin but completed only 12 laps and finished 17<sup>th</sup>.

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