

Beat: Sports

2017 Chinese Grand Prix - Saturday

Shanghai

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USPA NEWS - Centimetres separate the top three in Shanghai pole position shootout. Lewis today claimed his 63rd career pole position "" his sixth at the Shanghai International Circuit, second of the 2017 season and sixth in succession.

Lewis Hamilton -

It's been an interesting weekend so far, obviously, after missing running yesterday. It's been a challenge for all of us, trying to compile a lot of yesterday's work into this morning. Ferrari have been so fast through practice and then into qualifying. We knew it was going to be close and that we'd have to pull out all the stops to beat them. I managed to just chip away at it session to session, then make my last lap my fastest lap "" which is always the target but doesn't always work out that way. The lap started off not quite as well as my previous attempts. But from there it got better and better.

I felt really strong coming into the final corner knowing I was up by a couple of tenths. But it's always a bit nervy going into Turn 14, as you want to brake late to gain some time but it's easy to lose more if you get it wrong. Waiting to find out what the others had done after I crossed the line was pretty tense! I'm really happy with today and super grateful for the huge effort the team had put in to keep us in the fight. It's more exciting than ever right now. We're really fighting these guys out there and that's what racing's all about. It pushed you to raise the bar every time you go out, which I love. A big thank you to all the fans too. There were a lot of British flags out there which is great to see.

Valtteri Bottas -

It's a real shame Sebastian managed to get between us. I think last time it was a couple of hundredths and now it's a thousandth. Around a lap here there are a quite a lot of places you can lose one thousandth of a second, so I will look to see where improvements can be made as always. But anyway, the race is tomorrow and we are first and third on the grid as a team, which is a good place to start.

Anything can happen with the weather too. Lewis was strong today and Ferrari were very quick too. We were always expecting a close fight and I think it will be the same tomorrow. Thanks again to the team, who did a great job in the short amount of practice time we had today to get the car set up well. It was really enjoyable to drive. Let's see what tomorrow brings.

Toto Wolff, Head of Mercedes-Benz Motorsport -

Qualifying is a very different experience this year! I find it incredible that you can invent a brand new set of rules, the same for everybody; that the teams go away and do so much work; and still we end up fighting for thousandths of a second to decide positions on the front row. It was a very tense end to Q3 and with everything coming down to that final run.

Both drivers improved on their final effort: Lewis did a brilliant lap to convert his provisional pole into the real thing and Valtteri found 0.4s. He had a great final sector but lost out to Vettel by one thousandth "" or just under 6cm in distance. It's a great battle with Ferrari and we are putting everything on the line each time we go out on track. For tomorrow, it will be a bit of a voyage into the unknown: the conditions are predicted to be cooler, perhaps wet, and we don't have any Friday data points to work with. So we will need to see if we have anticipated things correctly.

James Allison, Technical Director -

The 75th Formula One pole for the Silver Arrows "" what a great achievement for the team! We saw just how close it was in Melbourne and if there was any doubt still remaining, then today has underlined that F1 2017 is a season of very small margins. It's great to get pole position but it's a shame to miss out on a front row lockout by just one thousandth of a second. It's a helpful reminder to us that every single tiny fraction counts. Now we're looking forward to the battle tomorrow with Ferrari. We're expecting a cooler day for the race, wet in the morning before drying out in the afternoon.

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