

Mechanical glitches spoil the day

Today, A1 Team France took part in free practice followed by qualifying for the sixth round of the 2008-09 A1GP World Cup of Motorsport that will take place on the new Portimao circuit in the Algarve tomorrow.

After setting a promising seventh time in the free morning session, A1 Team France driver Nicolas Prost felt pretty confident when qualifying began. But a string of mechanical problems upset the team's plans. The A1 Team France car suffered a broken exhaust pipe in the first segment and Nicolas was unable to defend his chances. What was worse was that by the time the team had repaired it, there was no time left to compete in the second segment, so he ended up eighteenth quickest.

It didn't get any better in the third and fourth parts of qualifying. When Prost went out, he realised that the car was afflicted with braking problems, and this handicapped his performance. In these conditions, he could do no better than nineteenth quickest.

This evening A1 Team France and the A1GP engineers are going to try and pinpoint the problems and fix them in time for tomorrow's two races.

Olivier Panis, Sporting Director: "We're obviously very disappointed but there's not much we can do when mechanical problems rear their head. This is also part of motor racing. The two glitches we had today are all the more infuriating, as our performance had kept us in the top eight since the start of the weekend. Tomorrow, we'll have to try and avoid the pushing and shoving in the first corner, and take advantage of an aggressive strategy to fight our way up through the field. You never know, a neutralisation or a shower could turn the hierarchy upside down!"

Nicolas Prost:

Free practice 2: 7th time in 1m 31.867s
Qualifying 1 and 2: 18th time in 1m 36.567s
Qualifying 3 and 4: 19th time in 1m 32.941s

"It's been a very frustrating day. Our performance at the start of the weekend was pretty good, even if it's difficult to tame the track conditions here in Portimao. Unfortunately, a broken exhaust and then a problem with the brakes dashed our hopes. There was nothing we could do. In the first case we lost three seconds per lap and in the second it was almost impossible to slow the car. We've just got to put this disappointment behind us, and even if it'll be difficult to score points starting from so far back, I'll do my utmost to take advantage of the tiniest opportunity."

AB Motors will televise the 1st race at 2:00pm.
NT1 will show the race 2 at 3:00 on Sunday.

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