

Sunday 6 September 2020

## Hughes clinches victory ahead of Lawson in dramatic Race 2 at Monza

Sunday's action in Monza was the type of race which comes around once, maybe twice in a decade. A race so manic, so chaotic, that it's difficult to make sense of it. Round 8's FIA Formula 3 Race 2 was that race. Jake Hughes won from sixth, Lawson sealed second from P5 and Pourchaire completed the podium from ninth, but that barely even scratches the surface of the story.

None of top three from the grid finished in the points, all three of the PREMAs retired, Alex Smolyar took fourth from 20<sup>th</sup>, Alex Peroni nabbed sixth from 16<sup>th</sup>, Pierre-Louis Chovet clinched seventh from 18<sup>th</sup> for his first F3 points, while Olli Caldwell snuck into the points from P29.

At one point, Oscar Piastri was on course to stretch his Championship lead, but a four-car collision forced him to retire and robbed him of points.

Logan Sargeant was handed first place in the Drivers' standings as a result, with the PREMA racer somehow finding himself in fifth having started from 26<sup>th</sup>. But it proved to be temporary, as the American was also forced to retire after a coming together with teammate Frederik Vesti, which dramatically took them both out of the race.

All the while, Hughes calmly stretched his lead out in front, letting the drama play out behind him, keeping his nose clean ahead of Liam Lawson. The duo would close out first and second, with Pourchaire making a late assault on the podium to finish in third place.

### AS IT HAPPENED

Starting from reverse grid pole on just his fourth F3 outing, Michael Belov stuttered off the line and fell behind his more experienced rivals at the first corner. Round 7 race winner Lirim Zendeli fired his Trident up from fourth when the lights went out, taking a tow into Turn 1 and sending it down inside of the Charouz driver.

Enzo Fittipaldi's getaway was decent as well, just not quite as strong. The Brazilian dove down the opposite side of Belov and powered his way ahead, but Zendeli's Trident had the racing line and claimed first place.

Hughes and Lawson were well away themselves, launching past Belov from fifth and sixth to steal third and fourth. Piastri took a couple more laps but made his way past the Charouz driver too.

**CONTINUES**

Zendeli was furiously trying to break the tow down the back straight, but Fittipaldi was hot on his heels and giving him no respite - his engineer telling him on the radio to chase the lead and forget about his tyres for now. The duo went back and forth in their fight for the win, as Fittipaldi initially mugged the German of P1 at the second chicane, before Zendeli recovered it on the main straight.

Lawson had tussled his way ahead of Hughes and was sitting patiently behind the battling front two, who continued to dice back and forth between first and second.

The Hitech racer was right to remain patient. The front two went side-by-side through the final corner as Fittipaldi edged ahead, but Zendeli fought back on the main straight and clipped the HWA's rear left tyre.

Fittipaldi wobbled and tumbled back, quickly realising he had a puncture, while Lawson skipped ahead of them both for the lead. Zendeli escaped any damage himself but slumped to sixth.

Behind them, Piastrri had wrestled his way up to fourth and was eyeing a third race win but his hopes were dashed by Clément Novalak, who had a weekend to forget having taken out Piastrri's teammate, and Championship rival, Sargeant in Race 1.

The Carlin Buzz racer locked up into Turn 1 and tagged the back of Piastrri's PREMA. The Australian was spun 180 degrees and collected Belov, leaving David Schumacher with nowhere to go. All bar Belov were dumped out of the race and forced to retire.

The main beneficiary of all this? Piastrri's title rival, Sargeant. The PREMA racer had begun the day in P26, seemingly with little of a points finish, but found himself up in sixth place with the Championship leader out of the race – an exact reversal of Race 1. "Let's go I can win this," screeched the American on team radio.

The marshals were quick to clear up the debris during a Virtual Safety Car period, and Hughes darted off into the distance at the restart having quietly taken the lead from Lawson during all of the chaos.

Sargeant instantly fired ahead of Zendeli, but was held up by teammate Vesti. The American was getting frustrated and attempted a lunge down through the inside of Parabolica, but the Dane refused to surrender the position and forced Sargeant to back off, with the two nearly coming to blows.

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Having very nearly collided, Sargeant opted to ease off, knowing how disastrous a pointless finish would be to his title hopes. With DRS, Zendeli and Pourchaire both worked their way past him.

The pair got past Vesti too, which revived the PREMA duo's battle, but this time it would end in disaster. The American clambered past, but Vesti clipped his right rear tyre and dumped his teammate into the gravel with an instant puncture. Vesti had suffered damage to his front wing and both drivers were out of the race.

Throughout all of this, Hughes was blissfully skipping towards the finish line, building up a 1.8s buffer to keep Lawson at bay. Pourchaire made a late dash past Zendeli for the final podium spot, with the Trident then losing a place to Alex Smolyar as well.

Alex Peroni sealed sixth. Chovet was seventh, ahead of Roman Stanek, Caldwell and Richard Verschoor.

In the Drivers' Championship, Piastrini remains in first place on 160 points, eight ahead of Sargeant. Lawson is up to third with 135 and Pourchaire fourth on 134. David Beckmann is fifth with 124.5. In the Teams' title fight, champions PREMA are first with 429.5 points, ahead of Trident on 225.5. ART Grand Prix are third, ahead of Hitech Grand Prix and MP Motorsport

#### **KEY QUOTE – JAKE HUGHES (HWA RACELAB)**

"It has always been a dream to stand on the top step of this famous podium, I have come close before, but now we have finally done it. Credit to the team, the car was flying and it made the second half of the race quite comfortable.

"The first half was pretty messy, with quite a lot going on, but I am really, really happy. Especially, after Spa interrupted our good run of form. Now, I am looking forward to Mugello."

#### **WHAT'S NEXT?**

Just eight points separate the top two in the Drivers' Championship heading into the season finale at Mugello, where we will crown the second F3 champion. After the chaos of Round 8, who takes the title is still anyone's guess.

**ENDS**