

Mexico City, October 17, 2016

START FAST, FINISH STRONG

Will Lewis leave them standing? Can Nico nip in front? Will Max have the momentum? What can Checo come up with? So many questions ahead of this afternoon's 71-lap race...

Don't despair, Mexico!

One of Sergio Pérez's favourite slogans is 'Never give up' – and his legions of Mexican fans should take heed. Checo may be starting from farther back on the grid than he wanted, but he's looking to move forward fast. 'The good news is that we made some progress with the car in between final practice and qualifying,' says the man who finished eighth here last year. 'Our race pace looks competitive and I think we can come away with a good result.' Checo needs to catch the Williams pair, Valtteri Bottas and Felipe Massa, and hook up with teammate Nico Hülkenberg – a hero in qualifying with fifth place – to keep Force India in fourth place overall.

Is Lewis likely to leg it?

Starts have not been the Silver Arrows' strongest point of late – and pole-sitter Lewis Hamilton could be forgiven for looking over his shoulder, with Max Verstappen's Red Bull right behind him on Supersofts. But Hamilton is playing a longer game. 'Red Bull might have a slight advantage off the line on the Supersoft,' he concedes, 'but it looks like that tyre will grain quite badly. As always, our strategist has done a fantastic job there. Looking after the soft tyre, avoiding lockups and flat spots will give us a challenge. But the car has been great this weekend, so I hope that continues through (Sunday).'

Max out your chances!

Verstappen, F1's hottest talent since Seb, has his sights set on a super start. 'It is a long run into Turn 1,' says the Flying Dutchman, 'and we start on the Supersoft compound so our chance of making progress straight away is high'. But the Red Bulls are also looking further ahead: 'Race pace looked strong,' adds Max, 'which means we are looking forward to (Sunday).'

Right alongside Max on the grid is Dan the Man – Australian Daniel Ricciardo, who is looking to consolidate his third place in the Drivers' Championship. 'I think we can have a good race,' says the smiling Aussie who does the thing with the shoe on the podium, 'but to predict what's going to happen tomorrow after this qualifying is difficult.'

Let's hear it for Esteban!

If Checo has a fight on his hands, what about Esteban Gutiérrez? His Haas team has endured a difficult weekend and the Mexican starts from 17th on the grid. But some help from home would be appreciated, as he said after Saturday's qualifying: 'Sometimes you get it right, sometimes you don't, but at least I know I gave it the maximum. When I got out of the car, I wasn't very happy, but walking along the pit lane everybody was cheering, and it was an amazing feeling just to see their support.' Same thing Sunday?

Temptation for Romain?

Gutiérrez's Haas teammate Romain Grosjean starts from last on the grid. Earlier in the day he was scheduled to take part in the drivers' parade in a superb Mustang: after all his frustrations with electrical issues and front tyres, might the Frenchman be tempted to swap one American car for another?

Last word...

... goes to young Manor Racing driver Pascal Wehrlein. The F1 rookie made it through to Q2 on Saturday for the fourth time this season and he is ready to race: 'Well, P16 on the grid is great. I need a good start, then I will push as hard as I can. We'll be challenging the guys in front of us and I believe that everything is possible. Bring it on.' Now *that's* what you want to hear from a racing driver...

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