



2021 FORMULA 1 QATAR GRAND PRIX PREVIEW

React and adapt

Formula 1 visits Qatar for the first time this weekend but someone who knows the Losail International Circuit better than anyone is Alpine F1 Team's Racing Director Davide Brivio, whose knowledge stems from his MotoGP experience. Davide explains the key challenges of this weekend.

From your previous experience, what is the Losail International Circuit like?

We're looking forward to going to Qatar as it's the first time that Formula 1 has ever been there. I think it's going to be interesting to see how the Formula 1 car works there as it's unknown for all teams and drivers. In my experience, I've been many times to Qatar as MotoGP raced there since 2004. It's a nice circuit, which has a little bit of everything. There's the long straight at almost 1km in length and possibly an overtaking opportunity into Turn 1. After that there are many long sweeping corners, which flow quite nicely.

What conditions can Formula 1 expect?

We're going there at a good time of year with the warm weather. I'd imagine it will be warmer than Mexico and Brazil and much more stable. The heat will provide some challenges on cooling but similar to what we see in Bahrain for example. Racing in the evening will see lower temperatures though and it could be quite windy at the same time. Free Practice 1 will likely be very dusty from the sand, but it will clean as the sessions go on through the weekend. On the whole, the facilities are good there and it should be a good race weekend.

What other challenges might there be?

We're arriving at the end of the triple header, which has been very busy for everyone. What is interesting about this weekend, is that no team or driver would have been to Losail before. It's an unknown circuit for Formula 1 so it will be interesting to see how the teams and drivers adapt to learning a new circuit. Also, because the race was added quite late in the calendar during a busy part of the year, there hasn't been too much time for simulation and preparation. We'll see who has reacted and adapted the quickest, which is a unique challenge for everyone.





Taking on the unknown

Esteban Ocon returned to the points in Brazil after securing eighth place at the chequered flag at Interlagos. The Frenchman wants to add to his points tally this weekend as Formula 1 heads to Qatar for the first time to conclude the latest triple header.

What do you know about the Losail International Circuit?

Like all the drivers on the grid, we're heading into the unknown in Qatar as it's a place Formula 1 has never raced at. Of course, a lot of us have watched the MotoGP there so we know some bits of information about the track like the long straight and sweeping corners. It's probably going to have quite similar characteristics to Bahrain in the fact that it's going to be windy, dusty and also a night race, which are always enjoyable and unique.

How challenging is it to learn a completely new circuit?

It's a fun challenge when we go to new circuits. We're all in the same position as no one has driven the track, and that's the challenge we face at the next two races in Qatar and Saudi Arabia. I'll go on a simulator to prepare as best as possible and try to have a good understanding of the lines and pick up some tips. Learning a new track probably places more of an emphasis on the driver as it's all about trying to get up to speed quickly and try and find some things that others might not. It's a nice challenge for us to take on as a team.

What's your mindset leaving Brazil heading into the final race of the triple header?

It was great to have both cars back in the points in Brazil. I really enjoyed the race as there was plenty going on and we had some mega battles on track. We remain fifth in the Constructors' Championship after taking six points between Fernando and I. We know teamwork and consistency is going to be key to keeping fifth by the end of the season. We're looking ahead and we're focused on getting the job done. Our main target immediately is building off from scoring double points in Brazil with a successful result in Qatar to end this triple header as best as we can.





New places

Fernando Alonso heads to Qatar for the final stretch of races this season in the Middle East. He enters the end of the triple header following a strong recovery drive in Brazil, that saw the Spaniard score points for the thirteenth time this season.

You grabbed ninth in Brazil; how did you find the race?

We had good pace during the weekend, and I think we were always fighting back a bit after a poor start to the Sprint on Saturday. The race itself was good but I think we reached our potential and couldn't hold off the Alpha Tauri who had fresher tyres. We tried our best, but their pace advantage was too strong on the new tyres. In the end we had both cars finish in the points and that is what we need to do if we're to finish ahead of them in the standings. It'll be close until the end, so we need to maximise everything from the last three races and continue to work together well like we did in Brazil.

Qatar is a new one for most of the field, what are your expectations heading there?

I always enjoy racing in the Middle East. Losail is a track we don't know that well, but it's been on the MotoGP calendar for many years, so we're open minded heading there. I've chatted with Davide Brivio about the circuit to see what he had to say as he has the most experience there in the whole team. We race in quite a few circuits there and the facilities are good, and you're usually guaranteed nice weather. We've had a look at the track on simulators and onboard and it does look fast with a nice flow to it. It'll be interesting to see how a Formula 1 car behaves around the circuit compared to a motorcycle.

It's back to a standard race weekend in Qatar, what is your evaluation of the Sprint Race format used this year?

I think they have made the weekend more exciting as if you're a fan watching from home you get to see two races. It's also good to go straight into the exciting stuff like qualifying, rather than have two practice sessions on Friday. It's useful for us and the teams to have these practice sessions, but maybe as a fan it's not that exciting to watch. From what we've seen with Sprint Qualifying, when you have the grid line-up in its performance order then of course you're going to see those cars finishing in that same way. We saw when Lewis (Hamilton) came charging through on Saturday it was fun to watch but everything else was staying the same. And we see the same in Formula 2 and Formula 3 due to the reverse grids. I think the format is interesting and it's important we try something different, but there are a few tweaks we need to look at to make it a total package. I'm sure we'll all chat about this next season and see what can be done.



MAPFRE



MANDIANT



EURODATACAR



GENII





Tyres:

Hard, C1 (White)

Esteban – 2
Fernando - 2

Medium, C2 (Yellow)

Esteban – 3
Fernando - 3

Soft, C3 (Red)

Esteban – 8
Fernando – 8

