

STRONG SEASON OPENER FOR RENAULT VITALITY IN F1 ESPORTS PRO SERIES

Renault Vitality's F1 Esports Pro Series campaign got underway in grand style yesterday as Nicolas Longuet took a pole position, podium and fastest lap in the first event on the 2020 calendar. Frenchman Nicolas and team-mate Fabrizio Donoso, from Chile, sealed a string of points finishes in the opening rounds to put the team third in the team championship.

Held over two evenings, Nicolas and Fabrizio took on the Bahrain, Vietnam and China tracks. The event started well as Nicolas scored the first pole of his career in Bahrain. Fabrizio put in a strong lap but started in sixteenth, with the field very closely matched. In the race Nicolas was held in the pits, costing him a shot at the win, and passed the flag fifth. Fabrizio, stuck in traffic, brought the car home nineteenth.

The following race in Hanoi brought another pole for Nicolas but a penalty for touching the wall on the last corner demoted him to P5. Fabrizio qualified P11 but started tenth after a penalty for another competitor. A gamble with the strategy paid off as Nicolas and Fabrizio fought to first and third by the mid-point of the race. Fabrizio unfortunately got a three-second penalty for crossing the track limits and finished fourth, which was subsequently demoted to eighth. A small comfort was the Chilean was awarded driver of the day. Nico grabbed second place, narrowly missing out on a win following an epic last lap battle against current champion David Tonizza.

China was a more difficult race, with both cars starting outside the top ten. Nicolas and Fabrizio both made strong starts, but fell victim to first lap incidents. Nicolas battled through to fifteenth, scoring the fastest lap on the way, while Fabrizio recovered four places, making an aggressive strategy work. He finished in P10.

Renault Vitality sits third in the team standings while Nicolas is fourth and Fabrizio thirteenth in the drivers' championship. The next round takes place on 4 and 5 November in the Netherlands, Canada and Austria.

Nicolas Longuet: *"Overall, there are many positives to take from the first event. Firstly, we know that we are very competitive in both qualifying and the race. Secondly, there will always be a bad race from time to time, and it can only get better after them. We are going to work even harder for the second event to be able to capitalize on events in front and score some big points for both championships. This was only the beginning."*

Fabrizio Donoso : *"Third in the team championship is a positive considering the lows on my side in Bahrain and China. The competition is harder than ever but I trust the team and the potential to deliver through the season. We need to do a better job in qualifying and we will get there. We showed heart and passion and we have a lot more to show. Thanks to everyone supporting us, see you soon in event two."*

Richard Arnaud (coach) : *"As always it has been an eventful first round. I think people weren't expecting us at this level, and I am happy to have been able, even in a rebuild process to do better with the team than the same time last year. We scored in all races and even though we missed some opportunities, we took several others. I am happy about the attitude of the group and I am sure we will show even more in the next events; I believe in them. All objectives have been reached for me in the first event and now we have to set the bar even higher for the second."*

