**Beat: Sports**

# 2017 Australian Grand Prix - Friday

**Melbourne**

Melbourne, 24.03.2017, 15:04 Time

**USPA NEWS -** Back to business in Melbourne, with Lewis and Valtteri showing strong early form. Lewis continued to set the pace in the afternoon session with the fastest time of the day, as Valtteri rounded off his first Grand Prix Friday with the Silver Arrows third fastest.

Lewis Hamilton -
It´s great to be back in Australia and I´m super happy to be back in the car "" particularly after a first day like that. It was 99 per cent perfect. After struggling with some issues in Barcelona, we didn´t know if we´d have the same thing here. What´s really encouraging is that we´ve arrived at the track just a week later and the car is exactly where it should be.

It´s feeling great out there and the guys have done a fantastic job. We´ve shown good form so far on both the long and short runs and we got every lap done that we wanted to. The tyres performed really well today too. Coming into today, we really didn´t know where we´d be. We knew from FP1 that the Ferrari´s weren´t at their maximum. Of course, in FP2 all of a sudden they were quick. We´ll see tomorrow how it really stands. I feel very much at home in Melbourne. There´s always a great buzz here and a lot of support. I´m just really happy to see everyone and receive their positive energy. I´ll be pushing as hard as I can to win this race.

Valtteri Bottas -
It was great to be back on track after Barcelona and overall it was a good day today. We still have work to do with the car balance but we got all of our running completed without any issues. From my side I definitely feel like I can make a step forward tomorrow. It´l l be a busy evening for us tonight looking through all the data to see where we can improve but it´s a reasonable start.

In terms of our pace, it is only practice, so tomorrow we´ll find out exactly where we are. These tyre compounds are the right choice for this race. The softer compounds all felt good. Everyone is pushing to the limit, as we saw a few times out there today. This track is always quite dirty at the start of the weekend, but we´ll get used to it.

*Both drivers ran all three compounds in the morning session. Lewis used the Soft and UltraSoft in the afternoon, Valtteri the SuperSoft and UltraSoft

James Allison, Technical Director -

It always seems like a bit of a cliché to say that we were pleased to get through our programme smoothly. But in the first practice sessions of a new season "" particularly under new regulations like these "" it´s especially important to achieve that and also to leave the car intact for Saturday. On both counts, I think we can say that today was a smooth day.

Our programme focused on trying out the various tyre compounds that we have available this weekend to see what kind of pace and degradation we can expect from them. We also worked to ensure the car has a reasonable balance with race fuel and lower fuel. Our long run pace looked decent but it´s harder to tell where we stand at this stage in terms of single lap pace. We´ll find out tomorrow. Overall the car seems strong, so we´re looking forward to seeing what we can do with it.

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