

2020 AUSTRALIAN & BAHRAIN GRANDS PRIXVIEW

PIERRE GASLY (#10)

“Even though we had two fewer days of testing than in the past, I think overall we are quite well prepared for the first couple of races, as the Barcelona tests went well. We were able to get a good initial understanding of the AT01. We hardly had any interruption to our track time, apart from one morning when I spent a bit of time in the garage. Reliability was very good and the performance seems to be in the right area. We still have a lot of work to do on the car to attain the goals we have set ourselves this year, but I’m very positive approaching the start of the season.

“It’s true that, because the regulations have been stable for a while now, reliability is generally better than before, but it is still a complicated process. For example, we must go the whole season with just three Power Units, otherwise, we get a penalty. It affects how much you can push the PU in every race and that’s the challenge for all the manufacturers, to be competitive and run all year. At the moment we are satisfied with the level we have reached. We have improved the car, but we need to find some more performance to really be able to do what we want to do in 2020. We have made a step forward in terms of aero compared to last year, but I know we have more to come during the year.

“We will get a slightly clearer idea in Australia, because testing is just testing, and the Albert Park track is very different to Barcelona. It’s a street track, very bumpy with very low grip levels, so we might see another picture to the one that came out of winter testing. What is clear is that it is again going to be very tight in the midfield, even a bit closer than last year. Melbourne is a unique event, naturally, as it’s the first race and everyone has been waiting for it for so long. One could say that it’s there that ‘we all drop our trousers and show everyone what we’ve got!’ It’s the first time everyone is absolutely flat out and the mix of corner types with very little grip is a big change from Barcelona, but it’s up to us to adapt to that. I am really keen to go racing again as I’ve missed it so much over the past three months. It’s meant to be a long season and I hope we can race as many times as possible given the current virus situation.

“From Melbourne, we go to Bahrain, which will be a completely different challenge. It’s hotter, the tyres have to work harder, and you have to watch the degradation, particularly on the rear. Overall, it’s a circuit I have always appreciated, and it was there two years ago that I came fourth with Toro Rosso, my second-best result in Formula 1. It’s a pleasure to go back there with the same people now called Scuderia AlphaTauri. It’s a complicated weekend with sessions taking place at different times of the day, at different temperatures and sometimes the wind can be a problem, upsetting the balance of the car. There are several straights so there are overtaking opportunities and generally the race is quite exciting there.”

DANIIL KVYAT (#26)

“We’ve done a lot of productive laps during winter testing, so I think we’re ready for this season and the challenge ahead. We started well in Barcelona, learning the characteristics of the new car, trying to make the most out of the new set-up directions. I’m sure we will get a lot more answers in the next two races in Australia and Bahrain, and we’re excited about that.

“The regulations being stable for another year offers an opportunity for the midfield teams to challenge the top ones, but of course, it will be tight this year between the other midfield teams and ourselves. Once again, it’s going to be a very interesting fight ahead and we’re looking forward to that. I hope the battle is going to be nice and close.

“I thought the behaviour of our new car was interesting in testing, we tried many different things, taking big steps to understand its behaviour as quickly as possible, which was a challenge with two fewer days of testing than last year. We were fairly happy with all the changes, putting everything together to try and make the best car out of it. It’s definitely a progression from last year, but we must wait to see where we are compared to the others. But the car feels like it has good potential, it’s just down to us now to unlock it.

That job starts right away in Melbourne. Every year we go to Australia and every year it’s as exciting as the first time. The excitement of racing is always very special. The track is quite old-school and it’s cool. I’m always excited to go to that track because it’s quite different and it’s an interesting one.

“It can feel strange starting the year on a bumpy street circuit after a few days testing on the relatively smooth Barcelona surface. The bumps make it challenging to find the right set-up and the fact it is quite dirty on Friday also makes life more difficult, but the track soon rubbers in and provides more grip as the weekend goes on. It’s fast for a street track, which makes it enjoyable and getting the corners just right and riding the kerbs well is always a good feeling.

“As for Bahrain, it presents different challenges compared to Melbourne as it’s a permanent race circuit, so it will be a more accurate test of where we are in terms of our car performance. It will be much warmer than in Melbourne, the first time this year we will run the tyres in these conditions. The temperature can vary a lot between sessions as some of them start in the evening. This makes finding the set-up quite tricky and it is also affected by strong winds that can pick up which has a knock-on effect that there is quite a lot of sand on the track, especially on Friday. I’ve not had any of my best results there in the previous years, but the track is okay and nice to drive with some interesting sections. The circuit has a good spot for overtaking at the hard-braking area at Turn 1, after the long straight, so let’s try and have some fun!”

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