

27th February 2024

2024 BAHRAIN GRAND PRIXVIEW

Daniel Ricciardo #3

"At last, it's time to go racing again. I can't wait to be honest. In contrast to last year, this time it's been good to have a proper pre-season. After 2022, I needed that time off, so it was great to jump in mid-season, but in terms of being fully prepared, this year has been a better way to get ready.

"I do feel that this is like the start of the second part of my career. Having some time off gives you a new perspective. I'm putting a lot of focus into what is a second opportunity for me, but at the same time, it's not putting pressure on myself. I'm hungry and motivated without any negative weight on my shoulders or stress attached to it, to interfere with my life.

"Like everyone else, I've only had a few hours testing in this year's car. It's natural for a new car to be an improvement on the previous one, but what counts is where we stand compared to everyone else. Have we improved more than them or have they improved more than us? It does feel better, but you're only as good as your competition lets you be. I've stayed in Bahrain since the test, and with the engineers we've spent a lot of hours studying all the data from the three days on track, so we know what we want to do as soon as we hit the track for Free Practice.

"I like Bahrain, it's a nice track and a good place to start the season. It's pretty challenging, especially on the rear tyres as the track is very rough. I've had some good moments there, never on the podium, but I've scored plenty of points. Of course, there's something special about the first race of the season. When you haven't raced for a few months, it feels a bit more intense. You can spend time in the simulator driving the track, but you can't practice racing intensely, wheel to wheel with 19 of the best guys in the world, and that makes for a pretty exciting feeling at the first race of the year."

Yuki Tsunoda #22

"We're about to go racing after what was a solid three days of testing for us, although, with all the teams running different programmes, we can't say where we are in terms of performance. We spent the time focusing on ourselves, working on understanding the car. The work we did was of high quality, completing a lot of laps reliably and achieving what we set out to do with no major issues, so that's positive. It was very productive, and we got answers in a lot of areas where we had question marks.

"I think it's very important to spend some time with all the guys before the start of the season, and because I stayed in Bahrain after the test, I organised a football game with the team, which was really fun. We played in the late afternoon when the temperature dropped a bit and, in fact, it was a bit chilly! One evening, I had dinner with my engineers and my side of the garage, and on another day, I played golf with my trainer and one of the team marketing guys.

"I wouldn't say we've made a massive step compared to the last race and last test of 2023 in Abu Dhabi, but that's partly because we brought updates there that were already aimed at 2024. Last week, we saw once again that they're working well and that the team has adopted the right philosophy with the car, which seems to handle well without extremes of oversteer or understeer. It's made a step forward on the mechanical side, so I'd say we have a good starting point for this season, with more development to come in the future.

"There have been a lot of new people joining the team over the winter and you could feel that at the test. There's a definite sense of change. Laurent is similar to Franz in that he takes an interest in every member of the team. I'd say it felt different, in a good way. We've always been hungry, but this time, it feels like we're hungry in a different way.

"After three days testing here, we have a good baseline for the start of Free Practice, and I'm happy with my lap times from testing. We focused a lot on the engineering side to understand how the car reacts and started to narrow down what test items we needed to look at and what areas to focus on for the actual race. We completed a lot of different tests, and this week it's time to put it all together and focus more on qualifying. There are a lot of areas we can explore with this car and our main target from Thursday will be to extract as much performance from it as possible. The first race of the season is always a little bit different as you don't know what to expect and which teams will be quick. There is definitely some mystery and excitement!"

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