

Valencia, Spain, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2010

## WICKENS SECURES FRONT ROW POSITION FOR VALENCIA FEATURE RACE

Status Grand Prix driver Robert Wickens will start today's GP3 Series feature race from the front row of the grid after an exhilarating qualifying session this morning at the Valencia street circuit.

The Canadian laid down a marker early in the 30-minute session by setting the fastest time by over 0.6sec, before engaging in an exciting battle with championship rival Esteban Gutierrez for pole position. Having been demoted from the top spot, Wickens was the first driver to dip into the 1m58s bracket to regain pole, before Gutierrez set a 1m58.65s lap to take the place back with eight minutes to go.

Wickens went out on his final set of new tyres but slid wide on the narrow circuit and brushed a retaining wall, ending his chance to improve. Gutierrez then went off at the same place and hit the wall, spinning into the circuit and causing a red flag that ended the session two minutes early. Seconds before that, though, Roberto Merhi had gone second quickest, but had a three-place grid penalty for a yellow-flag infringement in yesterday's practice. That meant Wickens remained locked into the front row alongside Gutierrez.

Status GP's Daniel Morad was another driver to be penalised in yesterday's session, which compounded the problems of a difficult qualifying for the Canadian-Lebanese driver. The GMH Motorsport driver was expected to be a contender for pole, but he never got a clear run to set a time as a combination of traffic and yellow flags frustrated his efforts and he was left 25<sup>th</sup> fastest, with a three-place penalty for the feature race on top.

Ivan Lukashovich continued his initiation in street circuit racing, with the Marussia Motors development driver having another trouble-free session as he built up speed and confidence, but was another caught out by the late red flag as he was getting his final set of new tyres up to temperature, and will start the race in 26<sup>th</sup>.

### The Drivers' View

**Robert Wickens (CAN): (Best time: 1m58.91s, +0.26s; Start Pos: 2<sup>nd</sup>).**

"We were definitely on it today. The brush with a wall was a case of trying too hard too soon on new tyres, but you have to push the envelope on street circuits and we've got a great chance in the race."

**Daniel Morad (LIB): (Best time: 2m00.41s, +1.76s; Start Pos: 28<sup>th</sup>).**

"It really couldn't have gone much worse – I just needed one clear lap on new tyres, but it never came. There was traffic, yellows and then the red flag. It's hugely disappointing but I'll give it everything in the race."

**Ivan Lukashovich (RUS): (Best time: 2m00.72s, +2.07s; Start Pos: 26<sup>th</sup>).**

"It took me too long to get up to speed really, and as I was building up to speed on my second set of new tyres there was the red flag. But there's scope to make up places in the race – you can certainly pass here."

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

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