



Leimer celebrates with Razia (l) and Palmer

GP2 FINALS, YAS MARINA (UAE), NOVEMBER 12-13

Leimer and Calado triumphant in Abu Dhabi one-off event

THE 'GP2 FINAL' AT Yas Marina was all about opportunity. For some, it was the chance to sample the rung below Formula 1 for the first time. To others, it was a fresh start at a different team. It was one of those in the latter category – Fabio Leimer – who seized upon the chance to banish memories of a disappointing season. After switching from Rapax to Racing Engineering, the Swiss delivered a beautifully-controlled drive from pole position to claim his first feature race victory. He also triumphed overall in the event, for which points were awarded in usual GP2 style.

A touch of good fortune helped Leimer. When the ART car of Esteban Gutierrez ground to a halt with a gearbox problem late in qualifying, bringing out

a red flag, that stymied many of Leimer's rivals and secured pole for the ex-Formula Master champ.

Then an opening-lap clash between Dani Clos and Josef Kral put both out of contention as they stumbled upon a three-car incident ahead of them.

The man who instigated that incident, AirAsia's Luiz Razia, was second at the end of the first lap, but already 1.8s down on Leimer.

Leimer, watched by F1 team boss Peter Sauber – for whom he is due to have gained his first taste of grand prix machinery this week – waited until Razia had pitted before heading in himself two laps later. After setting fastest lap, Leimer eased off.

The only driver other than Leimer to lead was Jolyon Palmer. The Brit, who had switched to Addax, was the

last frontrunner to pit and retained the third place he had taken at the start after Clos and Kral clashed. It was his first podium finish in GP2 and came after absorbing pressure from iSport's Marcus Ericsson in the closing laps.

But Leimer wasn't the only driver seizing his chance. Control-tyre supplier Pirelli put up prizes of €15,000 and €10,000 for the highest-scoring GP2 graduates over the weekend, and a trio of the contenders sewed up the first three spots on the sprint-race grid. Tom Dillmann, Antonio Felix da Costa and James Calado finished sixth, seventh and eighth respectively on Saturday, and the ART-run Brit converted his resultant reversed-grid pole into a lights-to-flag victory, pocketing the money in the process.

He didn't have it easy as Ericsson jumped to third at the start and soon dispatched da Costa, who later dropped back with a drive-through penalty. But he could not get within 0.7s of Calado, who was always certain that his GP3-honed racecraft would win out.

Behind iSport runner Dillmann and Palmer, a spectacular last-lap scrap for fifth enlivened things. It ended with Gutierrez jumping from ninth to secure the position, and Stefano Coletti in the wall after being hit by Leimer. Cecon, Alexander Rossi, Razia (who had run third before serving

a drive-through penalty) Clos and Leimer were in that dramatic scrap before the Mexican – who started 21st – prevailed. ● Edd Straw

RESULTS

Race 1 Fabio Leimer, 31 laps, 58m53.563s; 2 Luiz Razia, +6.9s; 3 Jolyon Palmer; 4 Marcus Ericsson; 5 Kevin Ceccon; 6 Tom Dillmann; 7 Antonio Felix da Costa; 8 James Calado; 9 Nathanael Berthon; 10 Stefano Coletti. **Race 2** James Calado, 22 laps in 41m26.194s; 2 Ericsson, +1.770s; 3 Dillmann; 4 Palmer; 5 Esteban Gutierrez; 6 Ceccon; 7 Alexander Rossi; 8 Razia; 9 Dani Clos; 10 Leimer. **Points** 1 Leimer, 2 Ericsson, 10; 3 Razia, 9; 4 Palmer, 9; 5 Calado, 7; 6 Dillmann, 7.



Calado won the race in his ART car