



Rookie Watarai extends his lead and Aussie Sumich gets his first win in Qatar

01/12/2025 The Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East provided the main curtain-raiser to the penultimate round of the Formula One World Championship in Qatar with a spectacular race under lights and an abandoned race due to a crash on Lap 2.

The second round of the Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East displayed both the highs and lows of motor racing with a debut win for Australian Caleb Sumich for Team DHL and an abandoned Race Two due to an accident on Sunday afternoon.

Continuing his momentum from the opening round, Japanese rookie Taichi Watarai once again dominated practice and qualifying, taking pole position in his Seven X Seven Porsche 911 (992) GT3 Cup car with a time of 1 minute 57.344 from Australian Caleb Sumich in the DHL Team car.

Qatar's Abdullah Al Khelaifi started Race One from third place for the Qatar Motor and Motorcycle

Federation (QMMF) in front of his home crowd alongside Saudi Racing's Khaled Alahmadi on Row Two.

Watarai's team-mate Bankcy took pole in the Pro Am category starting from eighth outright with Cedric Chassang second in ninth outright and Australia's Sam Shahin starting from third in Pro Am and 11th outright. Krister Andero gave Mtech Competition Pole for Masters from Petr Brecka and Mark J. Thomas.

After 11 laps under lights following the F1 qualifying session, Australia's Caleb Sumich took the lead from Seven X Seven's Taichi Watarai and after an intense battle claimed his first win in the Porsche Carrera Cup Middle East with Team DHL by just 1.276 seconds from Watarai. Rounding out the podium in front of his home crowd was Al Khelaifi in the QMMF entry.

Chassang and Shahin gave Team GP Elite a one-two result in the Pro Am class with Bankcy third while Brecka took the Masters win for GT Sports Technology in front of the Mtech Competition car of Andero and Mark J. Thomas racing for M3L Team in third.

Under very different conditions of the early afternoon sun the next day as the warm up to the Qatar Formula One Grand Prix, it was once again Watarai who started from pole position alongside Sumich, however for the GCC honours, Saudi Racing's Alahmadi grabbed P3 on the grid from Qatar's Al Khelaifi in fourth with Splendid Racing's Alexandra Vateva starting from fifth and Alahmadi's team mate, Saud Al Saud rounding out the top six.

Chassang again was the quickest qualifier in Pro Am from his Team GP Elite teammate Shahin and the Seven X Seven car of Bankcy in third starting in P11. Andero was quickest of the Masters drivers from Thomas and Brecka for the final 11 lap race of the weekend.

Unfortunately, Race 2 was unable to be completed after an accident on the second lap. Watarai got the jump off the start and lead into Lap Two before a crash involving Saudi Racing's Al Saud brought out the Red Flag as it necessitated repairs to the track barriers. Fortunately the Saudi driver escaped without injury but given the time constraints with holding a round of the Formula One World Championship, the decision was made to not re-start the race.

With only two laps completed, Race Two was declared and half points were awarded.

"While we are disappointed that we could not finish the race, the safety of our drivers will always remain our highest priority and we're pleased to report that no one was injured," Series Head and Promoter Robert Lechner said.

"We now shift our focus to Round Three in Dubai in the New Year and thank everyone in Qatar, Formula One and the QMMF for their unwavering support of the Carrera Cup Middle East yet again," he added.

At the conclusion of the second round, Watarai already holds a commanding lead in the championship with 82.5 points from Alahmadi on 51.5 and Sumich on 49 points. Chassang leads the Pro Am category

on 79.5 points from Shahin on 70 while Banky lies just 2.5 points adrift in third. Brecka leads the Masters class with 78.5 points from Andero on 77.5 and Thomas on 61 points.

The battle for GCC honours currently favours Alahmadi on 51.5 points with his Saudi Racing team mate Al Saud on 35 and Qatari, Al Khelaifi third with 24 points despite not taking part in the opening round in Bahrain.

"Being part of the Qatar F1 Grand Prix is always a great honour for us and we are grateful for the opportunity. While we are disappointed that we couldn't complete the second race, the safety of our drivers will always remain our highest priority," General Manager, Michael Schoch said.

Round Three will be at the Dubai Autodrome in the UAE on January 24 and 25.

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