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Media Information

BMW Motorrad Motorsport

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WorldSBK Saturday at Portimão: Michael van der Mark retires from battle for podium through no fault of his own after strong performance.

- Eleventh round of the FIM Superbike World Championship 2021 at Portimão.
- Michael van der Mark is touched by a rival and falls in Saturday's race while in a promising position; Eugene Laverty finishes in ninth place.
- Jonas Folger completes race one in 15th position.

Portimão. A strong performance saw Michael van der Mark (NED) from the BMW Motorrad WorldSBK Team aim for the podium in Saturday's race at Portimão (POR). However, he was forced to retire six laps from the end, having fallen after another rider hit his rear wheel. Eugene Laverty (IRL), standing in for Tom Sykes (GBR) again at Portimão, finished the first race in ninth place. Jonas Folger (GER) from the Bonovo MGM Racing team was racing at Portimão for the first time and crossed the line in 15th position. The Portuguese racetrack is hosting the eleventh round of the FIM Superbike World Championship 2021 (WorldSBK).

In Superpole on Saturday morning, van der Mark claimed fifth place in the second row of the grid, on his BMW M 1000 RR. Laverty was also going well but fell after sliding during the closing stage of the qualifying session. That prevented him from bettering the lap time already posted and he finished in 13th place. Folger finished Superpole in 19th position.

Van der Mark initially fell back a few places at the start of the first race. However, a great recovery performance saw him move back up to swiftly become part of the chasing pack battling for the third spot on the podium. However, his charge to the podium came to an end on lap 15 out of 20 when a rider touched his rear wheel on entry to turn five, causing him to fall. Van der Mark got back up and re-joined but was forced to head for the pits and retire. Laverty moved up into the top ten at the start. As the race progressed, he fell back a little but then found his rhythm, crossing the finish line in ninth place. After 20 race laps, Folger secured 15th place to score one point.

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Quotes after race one at Portimão.

Marc Bongers, BMW Motorrad Motorsport Director: "We made good progress in the third practice session this morning. Michael gave an outstanding performance in qualifying. He often struggles with the qualifying tyres and it was amazing to get him into fifth place. Eugene had an unfortunate fall and had to be content with 13th place. Mickey didn't get the start quite right and he was back in twelfth place after the first few turns, but once again, he gave a very, very good chasing performance. We were right in the battle for the podium. Michael said that he would have made it and he had already moved into an overtaking position. Unfortunately, Andrea Locatelli then touched him from behind and caused the fall. That finished off the race for him. It was a real shame as he was clearly in with a chance of reaching the podium. So, we'll start the Superpole race tomorrow from P5 and then we'll see what's possible. Eugene rode a consistent race and I am confident that he will be able to take another step forward tomorrow at his home circuit."

Shaun Muir, Team Principal BMW Motorrad WorldSBK Team: "Eugene did a good job today. He rode a good race and came strong at the end which we know he can do. Superpole was difficult for him and we didn't get the Q tyre to work for him very well but in the end, he did a good job so credit to Eugene for that performance. I am still a bit lost for words on the Michael situation. Nevertheless, we have to dust ourselves down and build Mickey up overnight and get him ready for the Superpole race. We are clearly disappointed as we had the podium in sight which is what I think we deserved this weekend."

Michael van der Mark, BMW Motorrad WorldSBK Team: "This morning we changed a lot on the bike compared to yesterday and I felt really good in FP3. In Superpole, I had a good lap and I ended up starting in P5. That was a good step for us and I was really happy with the starting position. During race one, I messed up the start and got stuck in traffic at T1, so I lost a lot of places. After that I had a good pace and was catching the group in front of me. I managed to get past those guys and had some good battles but unfortunately, I got taken out at T5 by Locatelli which was a shame because we were fighting for the podium with Bautista and Baz. But that is racing, and we try again tomorrow."

Eugene Laverty, BMW Motorrad WorldSBK Team: "I am happy with that race result because we have been working progressively forward all weekend. The guys did a fantastic job in making the bike feel like my bike which made me feel like home. We qualified low but had a fantastic first few corners and gained a lot of positions. Unfortunately, we had a problem with the clutch at the start and had issues in corner entry

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but once I got used to this problem, I settled into a good rhythm and got a good result. Without this problem at the beginning, I think we could have been higher up today."

Jonas Folger, Bonovo MGM Racing: "Superpole and the race were really difficult today. In Superpole, we were unable to make use of the advantages the qualifying tyres normally bring. Unfortunately, I made a bad start to the race from 19th on the grid. I was playing catch-up for a long time and wasn't able to build up a good feel with the rear and front grip. I was struggling all through the race. We did manage to score one point, as some riders ahead of us took a tumble, but overall the race was rather disappointing."

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