

An electric weekend



There was chaos and controversy in a gripping finale to the Formula E season at the 2016 Visa London ePrix last weekend

Turn three at Battersea Park's temporary street circuit was always going to be tricky. After a long straight and two high-speed corners, it's a sharp left hand turn - the first time that the cars and drivers in the world's first electric racing series really have to test their nerve under braking.

Going into last weekend's two races at the 2016 Visa London ePrix, things were tight at the top between Swiss driver Sebastien Buemi, and Brazil's Lucas di Grassi. The first race of the weekend on Saturday only served to ramp up the tension further. Nico Prost

took the win, but the real attraction was the epic race-long tussle between di Grassi and Buemi, who almost collided several times.

Thousands of fans flocked to Battersea Park on a sunny Sunday for race two, expecting a close look at the technology of the future, as well as eSports performances and live music. They were also treated to a championship battle for the ages.

Buemi had the advantage - he'd set pole position for Sunday's race to put the drivers level on points at the top of the standings, so if he kept his nerve and stayed in front of di

Grassi, he knew he would be champion. But perhaps this pressure got to him. As lucky competition winners sipped champagne with their friends from the perfect vantage point of the Visa Fan Garage, Buemi seemed to crumble under the pressure. He got off to a slow start - consumed by the chasing pack. Di Grassi was closing the gap, and fast.

As the drivers slammed on the brakes for turn three, the whirr of their electric engines slowing slightly, the Brazilian collided with the back of his championship rival's car. After the race, the Swiss driver was not impressed, accusing his championship rival of deliberately driving into him in scenes reminiscent of many a heated title battle in F1. Alain Prost, watching on in his role as Senior Team Manager at Buemi's Renault e.Dams team, may have allowed himself a wry smile.

"I was not expecting to celebrate it that way. But in the end the best team and the best driver won."



Boost - the innovation unique to Formula E that allows fans to choose which drivers get a boost in on-track power during the race.

However, the series rules state that Fan Boost can't be used to claim the bonus points, so after a year of close racing, the two drivers were on their own. Back in the pits, they switched to their second cars. The engineers and strategists of both teams nervously monitored the timing screens, waiting for a clear piece of track so they could release their drivers at the best possible moment to set the fastest lap.

For these two title contenders, it had become a qualifying session - a straight shootout for the title, but with a full-scale race going on around them. Di Grassi's Abt Schaeffler Audi Sport team blinked first.

The Brazilian's tame efforts were easily topped by Buemi, who set the fastest lap and then improved on his time to set the benchmark of 1:24.582. In the dying stages of the race, di Grassi looked like he might have that beaten, but he lost time in the final sector and ended up five-hundredths of a second slower. Buemi had one more, even faster lap to confirm his position - he is the 2015-16 Formula E champion. "I was not expecting to celebrate it that way," said Buemi after the race. "But I'm more than happy. It was a tough season, and after what he did, I didn't know what to think. Even after when we were trying to set the fastest lap, he was waiting for me. But in the end the best team and the best driver won."

The teams now return to their bases to prepare for season three - where they will be working towards the future with renewed vigour after this season's demonstration of just how fine the margins are at the cutting-edge of motorsport.

E numbers



1:24.150s

Sebastien Buemi's fastest lap of Sunday's race at Battersea Park Street Circuit, which ended up clinching him the Formula E title after a controversial incident with his closest challenger Lucas di Grassi.

42,000

Fans made their way down to leafy Battersea Park by the side of the Thames for a taste of the future last weekend. Those lucky enough to be seated in the Visa Fan Garage enjoyed a spectacular VIP experience with stunning views and champagne.

7

Points collected by last year's Formula E champion, Visa ambassador Nelson Piquet Jr. It's been a difficult season for the Brazilian, but he finished a promising tenth in the last race of the season in London.

270

As well as the drivers' championship, Buemi's Renault e.Dams team were also the best constructor with 270 points. Di Grassi's ABT Schaeffler Audi Sport were second with 221 points,

400,000

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