

MICHELIN'S HOME RACE SERVES UP A LE MANS CLASSIC

Michelin was part of a MotoGP™ French frenzy at Le Mans today as Maverick Viñales (Movistar Yamaha MotoGP) raced to victory at the HJC Helmets Grand Prix de France with home favourite Johann Zarco (Monster Yamaha Tech3) joining him on the podium to the delight of the local spectators.

Pole-setter Viñales got the holeshot from the start and led from the line, but was immediately passed by Zarco, causing the home crowd to roar with approval. Using a soft compound MICHELIN Power Slick on the front and rear of his machine, Zarco pulled away at the front and made a small gap ahead of his rivals. Viñales never gave up the hunt though and stated to close down the Frenchman, before seizing the lead on lap-seven. By this time, Valentino Rossi (Movistar Yamaha MotoGP) had joined the battle at the front and he too passed Zarco to take second behind his team-mate.

It was now Rossi's turn to hunt the leader and he closed in and passed Viñales on lap-26, but the Spaniard fought back and continued to push hard forcing Rossi into an uncharacteristic mistake which saw the Italian crash on the final-lap. Viñales took the honours with a victory that also signalled Yamaha's 500th Grand Prix win in all classes and returned the Spaniard to the top of the riders' classification. Zarco benefited from Rossi's crash and inherited second place to give him his best MotoGP result and the title of First Independent Team Rider, a result that saw the first French rider on a MotoGP podium since 2009 and the first one in the top-three on home soil since 1988, making his achievement in-front of the home fans even greater significance. Third place went to Pedrosa, who raced from thirteenth on the grid to take the final podium position. Andrea Dovizioso (Ducati Team) took fourth after a fascinating battle with Crutchlow and Jorge Lorenzo (Ducati Team) finished in sixth. Jonas Folger (Monster Yamaha Tech 3) was next to cross the line in seventh, with Jack Miller (EG 0,0 Marc VDS) following him home for eighth. A second Frenchman in the top-ten saw Loris Baz (Reale Avintia Racing) take ninth, with Andrea Iannone (Team SUZUKI ECSTAR) securing tenth position.

As the race wore on Viñales, Rossi, and Dani Pedrosa (Repsol Honda Team) all broke the existing lap record, again demonstrating that the different compounds of Michelin front and rear tyres could be used to great effect as Viñales, and Rossi equipped their bikes with medium front and rear slick, while Pedrosa favoured and medium front and soft rear, this added to Zarco's choice, and Cal Crutchlow using a hard front and medium rear, meant again five of the six different choices of compounds were used.

Today's race marked another record-breaking weekend for Michelin. From the 12th circulation onwards the lap-record started to tumble as Viñales became the first to set a new marker, followed by Rossi and Pedrosa as the three recorded new bests a total of eight times between them. Viñales took the final prize as he set a time of 1'32.309 on the very last-lap and completed the race in 43'29.793 to record a new race duration record, over 16-seconds better than the previous best time.

The 28-lap event was watched by over 104,000 fans at trackside and the pleasantly dry and sunny conditions were in stark contrast to the cold and wet weather the paddock had encountered on the previous two-days, which meant the whole field had very little dry set-up time in preparation for the race. This showed again the consistency of the Michelin slicks as they coped with new Le Mans asphalt and produced a fantastic encounter with battles throughout the field.

Sadly, all this weekend's proceedings were overshadowed following the news that filtered through to the paddock on Thursday regarding former MotoGP and Michelin World Champion Nicky Hayden. The American was cycling near the Misano circuit in Italy when he was struck by a car and severely injured, resulting in serious trauma, he is currently in the Intensive Care unit at the Bufalini Hospital in Cesena, where the prognosis remains guarded. All at Michelin would like to wish Nicky and his family and the best, and everyone hopes for a full recovery from his injuries.

Michelin and the MotoGP paddock now heads across Europe to the picturesque and demanding Mugello circuit in Italy for round six of the championship, due to be held on Sunday 4th June.



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Maverick Viñales – Movistar Yamaha MotoGP:

“Today I felt really good, which was important after two races where I felt not so good. Today the bike felt great and we did a good job in the warm-up. We kept the tyres working well and over the weekend we’ve done some good work with Pascal and Michelin to get this result. We made the lap and race records which it really nice and so good, it is a great feeling today.”

Nicolas Goubert – Deputy Director, Technical Director and Supervisor of the MotoGP Programme:

“Firstly, I want to send my wishes on behalf of Michelin and myself to Nicky Hayden and his family and hope that he makes a complete recovery from what appears to be a very serious accident. Nicky is an exemplary sportsman and a great person away from the track. He was the last Michelin World Champion before the single tyre rule and has a special place in the hearts of all at Michelin, so we all hope for some good news soon.

“This weekend was complicated by the wet and cold weather over the first two-days, so there was very little chance for the teams to set the bikes up or get tyre information and feedback. That said though it gave us valuable wet weather time and data and the tyres worked well in the wet and drying conditions and we saw some impressive lap-times. With the limited dry time the riders had before the race we never expected the excitement we got this afternoon. Again different riders chose different selections, highlighting the choice we are giving to all. The new asphalt showed good signs of grip when we tested here earlier this month and so it proved in the race. The tyres matched the grip and we saw the lap-record beaten many times, we also witnessed the durability of the tyres as the fastest lap of the race came at the very end. That individual lap time is impressive, but when it is added to the race duration record it becomes even more pleasing. The race was also exciting and up until the end you didn’t have an idea of where victory would go, so it was also a great show for the fans. Congratulations to Maverick on his victory and a special mention to Johann for making France proud!”



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