

MICHELIN AND OLIVEIRA MAKE HISTORY IN PORTUGAL

Michelin saw the final chequered flag of 2020 fall today as the latest venue in MotoGP™ witnessed a comprehensive victory from start-to-finish for local hero Miguel Oliveira (Red Bull KTM Tech 3) in the Grande Prémio MEO de Portugal from the Algarve International Circuit near Portimao.

This was the first time that MotoGP had visited this impressive Portuguese circuit which features constant elevation changes that gives it the nickname of 'The Rollercoaster'. The 4,592m layout proved popular with riders and they used the grip from their MICHELIN Power Slick tyres to reap the full experience from the track. Michelin utilised the ruling that allowed it to bring four front and four rear slick tyres – this is permitted if it is a new track or has been recently resurfaced, which the Algarve International Circuit met on both counts. The undulating nature of the track meant the rear grip was a crucial factor for accelerating through the uphill sectors, whilst braking stability on the front was equally important as bikes and riders descended. During the two practice days all eight slick tyres were tried and tested by the field with four specifications being utilised in today's 25-lap race. The mix saw medium and hard front symmetric slick tyres being the preferred choice, whilst all the riders went for hard rear, but the choice was split between the symmetric and asymmetric versions they had available to them.

Oliveira took Pole Position on Saturday, making history as the first Portuguese rider to start from the front of the grid in the premier class. He followed that with making a perfect start to lead the field into the first turn and never looked under pressure for the whole race as he used the full grip of his MICHELIN Power Slicks to take victory by over three-seconds, recording the fastest lap of the race in the process. His victory also secured him the honour of First Independent Rider and gave him his second win of 2020.

Today's race was held in sunny, but quite windy weather, with track temperatures at 28°C and the remainder of the field made the most of the conditions to produce some amazing battles through the race with Jack Miller (Pramac Racing) and Franco Morbidelli (Petronas Yamaha SRT) repeating their final lap battle from last week for the remaining podium positions. This time the Australian gained the upper hand and took second, and his result was enough to secure the Constructor Championship for Ducati, whilst Morbidelli's third gave him the points to take the Independent Riders' title. Pol Espargaro (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) crossed the line fourth in his final race for KTM before heading to Honda next season, with Takaaki Nakagami (LCR Honda) in fifth. Sixth went to Andrea Dovizioso (Ducati Team) in his final race before taking a year's sabbatical, with Stefan Bradl (Repsol Honda Team) recording his best result of the year with seventh. Eighth was Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia Racing Team Gresini), with Alex Marquez (Repsol Honda Team) in ninth and Johann Zarco (Esponsorama Racing) rounding out the top-ten. Today also marked the final race for Cal Crutchlow (LCR Honda), as he retires from full-time Grand Prix racing to take up a testing role with Yamaha.

Michelin and MotoGP will now enter the winter break, which the French company will use to assess all of this season's data and plan for next year in readiness for the testing that is planned to start in February ahead of the first timetabled race of 2021, which is scheduled to get underway at Losail International Circuit in Qatar on Sunday 28th March 2021.



Miguel Oliveira - Red Bull KTM Tech 3:

“The race was good, we were one of the few riders to choose the hard front and I was a bit scared at first because of the wind, because I didn’t know how that would affect the temperature, but it worked really well. I have no complaints about the rear tyre at all, and it has been a perfect weekend for me.”

Piero Taramasso – Michelin Motorsport Two-Wheel Manager:

“What a fantastic circuit this is and it has produced some spectacular moments this weekend. We had a test here in October, but that never really prepares you for the true demands of racing. We chose a very good range of tyres and all were tried during the weekend, the warmer track temperatures meant that the soft was not really a race option, although the rear soft performed excellent in Qualifying and set some fast lap-times. In total we had eight specifications of tyres this weekend - as we were able to bring four front and four rear - and six of them were raceable options, which we were very pleased with considering this was the first time we have been here and the technicians had to decide on the compounds with little competitive data. In the end four were chosen including both of the hard options in asymmetric and symmetric, so we were certainly correct to bring both of those options. There was some excellent racing and despite the technical nature of the track the performance of tyres was very good throughout and produced some great racing and many overtaking manoeuvres as the riders used their tyres to the full.

“We have had a successful season despite all that has happened away from the track. We had nine different winners and a lot of manufacturers on the podium from week-to-week. It was quite difficult as we had to supply a lot of tyres for races that were close together, so logistically it was very demanding, but we did it without any problems. The new rear construction we introduced to give more grip and stability gave a new challenge to all the teams and some found a good setting early on, while some others had to make more adaptations to the bike and the rider’s style, but at the end it was very encouraging and we set records and saw exciting racing throughout the year. MotoE™ was also very positive as we introduced new front and rear tyres, with the compounds made with regenerated materials and we improved the performance a lot, the lap-times were quicker and the feedback from riders was very good. For Michelin this has been a good season and we look for to the next one.

“On behalf of Michelin I would like to send my congratulations and thanks to Dorna, IRTA, FIM, all the teams and riders, the Michelin staff and everyone that has been involved in MotoGP this season. It hasn’t been easy to make this championship happen during these adverse times, but the organisers have put on a fantastic show and everyone else concerned has contributed to making this a very special season that has given light to many race fans through some very dark times. Here’s to a brighter 2021 and see you in Qatar in March!

“Finally, we will say goodbye to Richard Rodrigues after this race, he has been the Technician for Suzuki, so leaves this year after helping them to championship glory and is heading to join the four-wheel world within Michelin, so we wish him all the best. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Tim Walpole, who has accompanied us for five-years during this fantastic adventure of MotoGP. A man of great values and an excellent Press Officer that we all appreciated. Professional, positive and passionate, Tim will always be a part of the Michelin family, and is very welcome to catch up with us in the MotoGP paddock any time.”



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