

MICHELIN AND DOVIZIOSO DELIGHT IN THE DESERT

Michelin saw the 2018 MotoGP™ World Championship kick off in very similar style to last season's epic encounters as Andrea Dovizioso (Ducati Team) and Marc Marquez (Repsol Honda Team) battled to a last-lap decider in Qatar before the Ducati mounted rider emerged as the victor.

Starting from fifth on the grid, Dovizioso settled into a smooth and fast rhythm, as Saturday's pole setter Johann Zarco (Monster Yamaha Tech 3) initially led into the first corner and then headed a fast group of 10 riders for 16 of the first 17 laps, before coming under pressure from Dovizioso on lap 18. The Italian on a Ducati shod with a medium front compound tyre and a soft rear, seized the advantage and took over at the front, with Marquez - using a hard front paired with a soft rear - close behind in second. With thoughts of some of last season's great battles between the two still fresh, the crowd hoped for more of the same and were not disappointed as Marquez used his Michelin tyres to the full extent to get the drive and make a pass on his Italian rival. He briefly led, but Dovizioso came straight back and took the upper-hand in the push to the line to seal victory by a mere 0.027 seconds. Close in third was Valentino Rossi (Movistar Yamaha MotoGP), who celebrated signing a new two-year contract with his team on Thursday, by taking the final podium place.

Zarco took pole position on Saturday, when the Frenchman broke the longest-standing best-lap record on the current calendar. It had stood since 2008, when Jorge Lorenzo posted a time of 1'53.927 using Michelin qualifying tyres on the fairly new Losail circuit. Zarco's time was 0.247 seconds quicker than the previous record, on a less grippy and aging surface made even more difficult by the dusty conditions. Fellow front-row position riders Marquez and Petrucci also bettered the previous best lap, with all three using tyres with the same compounds that featured in today's race, again showing the wide performance attributes of the MICHELIN Power Slicks.

Conditions at the 5,400m Losail International Circuit had been difficult all weekend as high winds blew sand from the surrounding desert on to the track surface. This increased abrasiveness, but it didn't hamper the performance of the MICHELIN Power Slick tyres as the whole field produced a spectacle of close racing.

Following home the top-three was Cal Crutchlow (LCR Honda) as he had the honour of First Independent Rider for his fourth place. Danilo Petrucci (Alma Pramac Racing) took fifth and on the way set the record for the fastest speed at Losail, with a stunning 351.9Km/h, demonstrating that both grip and drivability are important factors of the MICHELIN Power Slicks. Sixth went to Maverick Viñales (Movistar Yamaha MotoGP), seventh to Dani Pedrosa (Repsol Honda Team), with early pace-setter Zarco in eighth. The top-10 was rounded out by Andrea Iannone (Team SUZUKI ECSTAR) and Jack Miller (Alma Pramac Racing) respectively.

Michelin's next MotoGP journey will be to head south over the Equator and travel to Termas de Rio Hondo in Argentina, as the paddock moves to sample the delights of Latin America as round two of the MotoGP World Championship takes place on Sunday 8th April.



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Andrea Dovizioso - Ducati Team:

"I am so happy today because my feeling with the bike and the tyres throughout the weekend was very good and they worked really well during the race. This is a circuit where you must save the tyre, due to the nature of the track and I saved mine until the last four laps and did the fastest lap then. I couldn't create the gap and was surprised to see Marc there with me at the end, but overall I am really happy."

Piero Taramasso – Michelin Motorsport Two-Wheel Manager:

"What a great race to start the season and congratulations first to Andrea for the taking the win and to the other guys for a great show. The wind this weekend created an extra ingredient that we were not really expecting and it blew a lot of sand on to the track, making conditions much worse than when we were here at the test recently. This, allied to having day-time practice sessions and evening ones - where temperatures were very different - made tyre choice for the race a more complicated affair. The riders all went for the soft rear which was the new compound we introduced in the winter tests and all the riders liked it, so that was really important for us. We had a complete mix of all three compounds for the front, which again emphasised the choice we can supply to all the guys to give them different options and this was underlined with the fact that the three bikes on the podium were from three different manufacturers. We were pleased with the performance during the race and the tyres helped to produce another exciting weekend. This was highlighted with Johann's stunning pole lap on Saturday, that was a very old record that was set on qualifying tyres, so to see it broken on our race tyres was very pleasing."



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