

the 29 MAY 2007
challenge



MOTOGP
VERMEULEN
WINS WET
FRENCH GP

FORMULA ONE
McLAREN PAIR
RULE IN MONACO

PLUS
US RACING
Dario Franchitti clinches Indy 500 victory

KARTING
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ALONSO SEALS MONACO GLORY

McLaren's double champion heads a dominant one-two for the team in the streets of the Principality

Reigning double champion Fernando Alonso is back in the joint lead of this year's Formula One drivers' standings after taking his second consecutive Monaco Grand Prix win.

The McLaren driver – who repeated his 2006 victory in the Principality – was followed home by team-mate Lewis Hamilton in a lights-to-flag domination for the British outfit. Ferrari's Felipe Massa completed the podium.

Alonso's second victory of 2007 gives him a share of the title lead with regular podium finisher Hamilton on 38 points, while Bahrain and Spanish GP winner Massa is in third on 33 points. The McLaren team leads the constructors' standings on 76 points, with Ferrari second on 56 points.

The Monaco GP was the first race at which Bridgestone's soft and super soft compounds were used together, and the changing conditions of the street circuit meant that drivers adopted many different tyre strategies in the race.

"There was clear improvement in the usability of the super soft as the track rubbered-in," said F1 Head of Track Engineering Operations Kees van de Grint. "Both tyres were capable of any strategy and it was interesting to see the different approaches with one or two stops and using the compounds in different orders."

Facts & figures

- Fernando Alonso's second Monaco Grand Prix victory was the 14th for the McLaren team in the Principality and its 150th win as a Formula One constructor.
- Lewis Hamilton's second-place finish was his fourth successive such result and his fifth consecutive podium, further extending the record-breaking start to his rookie year.



Fernando Alonso's Monaco win puts him back in the joint lead of the title chase with McLaren team-mate Lewis Hamilton



Chris Vermeulen's win was the first for Suzuki in the MotoGP series

WET FRENCH WIN FOR VERMEULEN

Suzuki's Chris Vermeulen continued the strong start to the MotoGP season for Bridgestone-shod riders as he took a dominant victory in atrocious wet weather at the Le Mans circuit in France.

The Australian came out in front after pitting for wet tyres a lap earlier than his rivals and, despite worsening track conditions, held on to win from Honda Gresini's Marco Melandri and Ducati's Casey Stoner. The trio scored the second Bridgestone-shod 1-2-3 result in as many races.

Vermeulen's victory was the first of his career, the first for Suzuki in MotoGP – maintaining its rise in performance in 2007 – and the first win both in the wet and in France for a Bridgestone-shod rider.

Stoner's third place also allowed him to extend his lead in the championship to 21 points, with seven Bridgestone-shod riders in the top 10.

"The conditions were tough, and it was hard to know how much to push," Vermeulen said. "Some

guys passed me, and a lap or two later they were down on the road. In the end, I couldn't even hold full throttle down the straight.

"I'm over the moon with my first MotoGP win, so thanks to Suzuki for a great wet bike set-up and thanks to Bridgestone for competitive wet tyres."

Bridgestone Motorsport Motorcycle Race Tyre Development Manager Tooru Ubukata said the win was testament to the focus placed on wet tyre design and testing over the winter.

"I think that we were well placed to score a good result whatever the conditions, but the competitiveness of our wet-weather tyres was particularly satisfying," he added. "We've put a lot of work into our wet tyre development and today's result – our first win in wet conditions – shows that we've found a good direction."

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In brief...

Champ Car drivers go on tour
A group of frontrunning drivers from the Bridgestone-backed Champ Car World Series travelled to Europe this month to take part in a four-day European media tour to promote the overseas races at Zolder in Belgium on August 26 and Assen in the Netherlands on September 2. The highly successful event took in stops in London, Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris as the tour helped raise the international profile of the Champ Car series. The championship will also have a new race at Zuhai in China later this year, with an exact date yet to be confirmed.

Kogure wins in F1nippon

PIAA Nakajima's Takashi Kogure took his first win of the season and the second of his career in the third round of the Bridgestone-supported Formula Nippon series at the Twinring Motegi. Kogure was followed home by German Andre Lotterer in the lead DHG TOMS entry and mobilecast IMPUL driver Tsugio Matsuda. Kogure has now moved into second in the championship table behind Matsuda, who leads on 22 points.

Streit takes F3 lead in Japan

Roberto Streit has taken the lead of the Bridgestone-backed Japanese Formula 3 championship after scoring second place and a race win in the latest double-header of the series at the Twinring Motegi. Race one winner Oliver Jarvis had to settle for fifth place in race two, while pre-weekend points leader Kazuya Oshima suffered a torrid weekend and has dropped to third in the championship standings as a result.



Ardigo dominates kart opener

The international karting season got started in Ugento, Italy, this month, with Italian driver Marco Ardigo securing a double victory in the opening round of the European KF1 championship. He takes a 10-point lead over Frenchman Armand Convers into the next double-header at Varennes in France on June 24. Bridgestone-shod karters dominated the results, with only one non-Bridgestone runner making it into the top 25 runners in the second of the back-to-back races.

GP2 DELIGHT FOR MALDONADO

Trident Racing's Pastor Maldonado picked the perfect venue in which to score the first victory of his GP2 Series career as he won Saturday's support event to the Monaco Grand Prix.

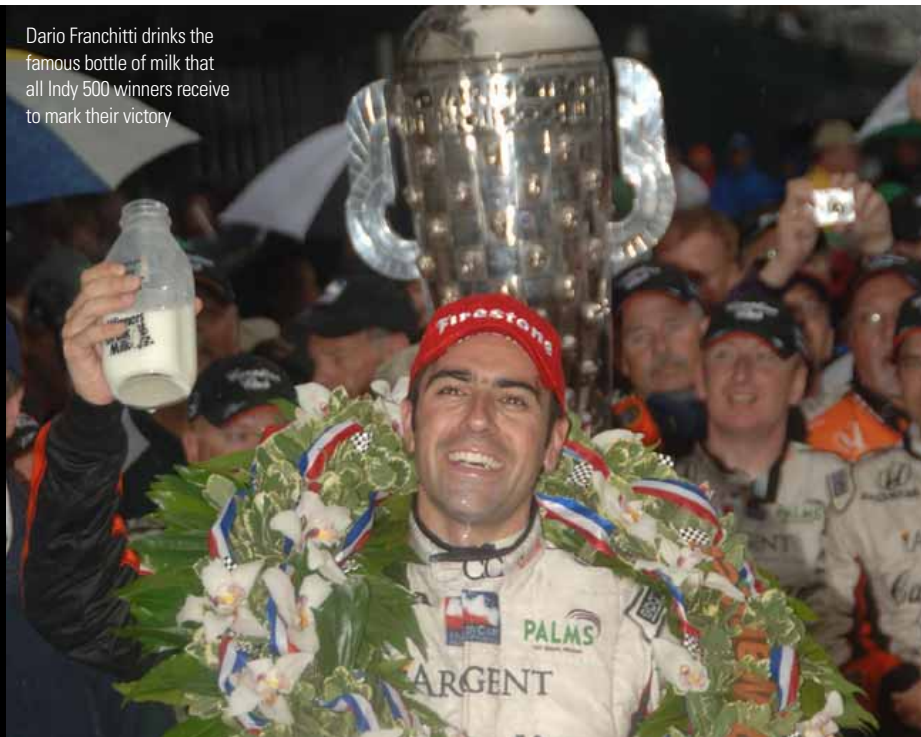
The Venezuelan – also making the podium for the first time in his GP2 career – dominated the sole feature race of the Monaco weekend from pole position, finishing eight seconds clear of Campos Grand Prix's Giorgio Pantano.

iSport International's Timo Glock completed the podium, allowing him to extend his championship lead over Luca Filippi – who finished fourth – to a full 16 points.

"This was a very hard race for the drivers," said Director of Bridgestone Motorsport Tyre Development Hirohide Hamashima. "The circuit was getting better and better during the course of the race, and this was shown by very good times being set in the later laps."



Dario Franchitti drinks the famous bottle of milk that all Indy 500 winners receive to mark their victory



Franchitti dodges Indy rain

Andretti Green Racing's Dario Franchitti took his first Indianapolis 500 victory in a rain-interrupted race on Sunday, becoming the first Scot to win the centrepiece of the US motorsport calendar since Jim Clark topped the field in 1965.

Franchitti, who started the race from third on the grid, had been forced to adopt a different pitstop strategy from his leading rivals after an earlier problem and was left heading the field on lap 166 of 200 as rain finally ended the event.

A shower at the midway point of the race had forced organisers to briefly halt proceedings for three hours to dry the high-speed oval track.

Scott Dixon was second for Ganassi Racing, while pole-sitter Helio Castroneves finished third

in his Penske-run car. Dixon now heads the standings on 184 points from Ganassi Racing team-mate Dan Wheldon – who finished 22nd – on 183 points and Franchitti on 181 points.

This was the first time Firestone's new Firehawk race tyre had been used in the Indy 500, after a successful race trial in the recent event at Motegi in Japan. It was also the 58th win for Firestone on the famous Brickyard oval.

"The Firestone tyres were great all day," Franchitti said. "We had no issues – great grip, great consistency, great speed. Even when it was raining, they were still gripping. I'm delighted to win the Indy 500 – this is the highlight of my career with Firestone."

HIROSHI TOMITSUKA

Engineer (Motorsport Tyre Development Department)

INSIDE LINE



What exactly does your job entail?

My job is to help Formula

One teams conduct vehicle simulation. In F1, a lot of time and money is spent on development, with teams conducting wind tunnel tests and vehicle dynamics computer simulations. For these they require tyre data, virtual tyre models and scale wind tunnel tyres. It is my job to ensure that they are supplied with the data and tyres that they need on time.

How did you start working in motorsport?

I joined Bridgestone in 1996, and was assigned to the motorsport development department. When I went for the interview I really wanted the position as I knew Bridgestone would supply tyres to F1. I've had a keen interest in motor racing since university, so I was really pleased when I heard that I had got the job.

How did you get into your current role?

At first, I developed tyres for touring cars. Over the years, Bridgestone has produced racing tyres for many touring car and sportscar series – the All Japan Grand Touring Car Championship, the Le Mans 24 Hours, the FIA GT championship and the Australian V8 Supercars series, for example. In 2000, I was appointed technical service engineer for F1, which involved travelling around the world to attend all the F1 tests and races. I returned to Japan in 2003 to take on my current position.

What's your proudest moment while working for Bridgestone?

The moment Bridgestone-shod vehicles started to win races and championships with tyres that I personally designed really has to be my proudest moment. However, I also feel proud when our tyres perform better than those of our competitors – even if we don't win the race or the championship. Ultimately, I am always really happy when standing beside racing cars at the race track.



(Main) Casey Stoner's wins in Qatar, Turkey and China have been highlights of the 2007 season so far; (Below) Chris Vermeulen's win in France was the fourth from five races for Bridgestone-shod riders

Leading the pack

The pace of competition in the MotoGP series may be hotter than ever in 2007, but Bridgestone-shod riders are still running strongly at the front of the field

Bridgestone-shod riders have had a spectacular start to this year's MotoGP campaign – especially when you consider the challenges that the company has had to overcome for 2007.

In contrast to other racing series, in which Bridgestone is the sole supplier to the entire field, the MotoGP department has to provide tyres to its partner teams that not only beat the competition, but that also prove versatile enough to give each rider the flexibility to adapt to their own unique style.

In addition for 2007, Bridgestone's engineers have faced restrictive tyre rules, as well as a change to 800cc bikes that places increased emphasis on tyre performance, and the logistics of two new teams and a new manufacturer to work with in the shape of Pramac d'Antin and Honda Gresini.

The results from the first five races, though, have proved that Bridgestone is more than up to the task. Casey Stoner's wins in the Qatar season-opener and in Turkey and China have given the Ducati rider a 21-point title lead, while seven of the top 10 riders in the standings are on Bridgestone tyres.

Honda Gresini's Marco Melandri and Toni Elias quickly adapted to Bridgestone's products, while Suzuki has had its best start to a season in years, with John Hopkins making the front row of the grid and the podium in China and Chris Vermeulen scoring a dramatic wet win in France. In both China and Turkey, Bridgestone-shod riders filled the podium.

The results in Turkey and China were of particular note, as Bridgestone previously struggled at the notoriously low-grip circuits. With MotoGP's limits on testing, the new generation of tyres couldn't be tried on the spot before the race, but Bridgestone's design team used their experience and resources in the factory to create a product that overcame the problem and then overtook the competition on the track.

"The problem in Turkey was not being able to generate grip and durability," says Bridgestone Manager of Motorcycle



"The wins in Qatar, Turkey and China mean a lot as they have never been easy tracks for us"

Hiroshi Yamada, Bridgestone

Sport Hiroshi Yamada. "The track has smooth, low-friction asphalt, on which our tyres struggle. We looked deeply into this and appear to have found a good direction. This year in Turkey and China we had strong pace through the full race, and most riders set their quickest times near the end.

"The wins in Qatar, Turkey and China mean a lot as they have never been easy tracks for us. We mustn't take the results for granted, though, as MotoGP is very competitive and the new rules have reduced the margin for error."

So, the 2007 MotoGP season may have had an excellent start, but, as you can see, the pressure remains high and Bridgestone is focused on the next hurdle to overcome.

Grooming the young guns

Bridgestone is involved in all levels of motorsport's talent ladder – right down to supporting the karters who will make up the Formula One grid in 10 years' time

When you look at the current generation of racing talent fighting for victory in Formula One, something quickly becomes apparent. They're all former karters. In fact, almost every F1 champion of the past 20 years got started in karts.

Although commencing a motorsport career in karts is not the only way of getting started – or the only barometer of potential – it is undoubtedly the best proving ground for an aspiring racer. In karts, you can be schooled in racing lines, car and engine set-up and overtaking in tightly fought packs.

Bridgestone has been involved in karting since 1977 and, from leisure karts to 220km/h top-level racers, the company has developed a formidable reputation for its kart tyres. Bridgestone-shod karters have won over 30 world crowns and 50 European titles. In the 2006 world championship, the whole grid of 34 drivers in the final – whittled down from almost 100 in the heats – was on Bridgestone tyres.

"We knew by Saturday that one of our drivers would be champion," says F1 Head of Track Engineering Operations Kees van de Grint. "That wasn't because we were the sole supplier. That shows the strength of our tyres."

Although karts may be smaller than single-seater race cars, the design philosophy for their tyres is just as complex and takes into account the unique characteristics that karts have in comparison to their bigger racing and road brothers, as well as the differences of scale and dimensions.

Kart tyres may be smaller, but they still have to be grippy and durable and they actually rotate at a similar rpm to F1 tyres. The corner loadings may be lower, but since the tyres are smaller, the cross-ply construction (rather than the radial method used in F1 and road tyres) has to be just as robust.

Tyre design also has to take into account a kart's reduced engine power. "You have to find a compromise," says van de Grint. "Drivers want grip for faster cornering and quicker lap times, but too much grip kills the engine, because it's not as powerful and it simply can't pull the kart out of corners."

Using the same dedicated methodology adopted in every rung of the racing ladder, Bridgestone has emerged as the market leader in kart tyres. The end result is that F1's future champions can win motorsport's top title on the same breed of tyres on which they made their first tentative steps.

1998

RACING MILESTONES

Bridgestone's second trip to the Monaco Grand Prix proved incredibly fruitful for Mika Häkkinen

As Bridgestone-shod Mika Häkkinen and the McLaren team rolled into Monaco in May 1998, wins in Australia, Brazil and Spain proved they were the package to beat. Monaco, though, remained relatively new territory for Bridgestone in its second Formula One campaign.

Wet weather in 1997 had levelled the playing field for the Bridgestone-supported teams, but this meant the tyre engineers had little practical feel as to how their compounds would perform in the dry at what remains F1's most unique circuit.

After showing dominant pace in qualifying, Häkkinen romped away from his rivals in the race. On Monaco's streets, though, an easy lead is a dangerous position to be in, as the proximity of the barriers makes any mistake – through even a brief lack of focus – incredibly costly.

Halfway through the race, Häkkinen lightly clipped the barrier and, for the next few laps, held his breath. There were no technical problems with the suspension, but a slow puncture was a threat.

Ultimately, though, the right-rear Bridgestone held firm and so did the Finn's resolve. Häkkinen steered through the streets to clinch both his and Bridgestone's first win in Monaco. In the next nine years, Bridgestone would score four more.



Formula 1's next generation of stars are likely to start their career on Bridgestone tyres

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLES

Formula One

Driver (Team)	Pts
1 Fernando Alonso (McLaren)	38
2 Lewis Hamilton (McLaren)	38
3 Felipe Massa (Ferrari)	33
4 Kimi Räikkönen (Ferrari)	23
5 Nick Heidfeld (BMW)	18
6 Giancarlo Fisichella (Renault)	13
10 June	Montreal, Canada
17 June	Indianapolis, USA
1 July	Magny Cours, France

MotoGP

Driver (Team)	Pts
1 Casey Stoner (Ducati)	102
2 Valentino Rossi (Yamaha)	81
3 Dani Pedrosa (Honda)	62
4 Marco Melandri (Gresini Honda)	61
5 Chris Vermeulen (Suzuki)	55
6 John Hopkins (Suzuki)	48
3 June	Mugello, Italy
10 June	Barcelona, Catalunya
24 June	Donington, Great Britain

* Bridgestone riders in red

GP2

Driver (Team)	Pts
1 Timo Glock (iSport)	37
2 Luca Filippi (Super Nova)	21
3 Lucas Di Grassi (ART GP)	18
4 Bruno Senna (Arden)	18
5 Pastor Maldonado (Trident)	12
6 Giorgio Pantano (Campos)	9
30 June-1 July	Magny Cours, France
7-8 July	Silverstone, Britain
21-22 July	Nürburg, Germany

Champ Car

Driver (Team)	Pts
1 Sébastien Bourdais (NHL)	73
2 Will Power (Team Australia)	70
3 Robert Doornbos (Minardi USA)	61
4 Alex Tagliani (RSPORTS)	57
5 Bruno Junqueira (Dale Coyne)	53
6 Oriol Servià (Forsythe)	51
10 June	Portland, USA
24 June	Cleveland, USA
1 July	Mt Tremblant, Canada

IndyCar Series

Driver (Team)	Pts
1 Scott Dixon (Ganassi)	184
2 Dan Wheldon (Ganassi)	183
3 Dario Franchitti (AGR)	181
4 Helio Castroneves (Penske)	171
5 Sam Hornish Jr (Penske)	151
6 Tony Kanaan (AGR)	151
3 June	Milwaukee, USA
9 June	Texas, USA
24 June	Iowa, USA

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