



## **TYRES AND TEAMS FEEL THE HEAT IN MALAYSIA SUCCESSFUL TEST FOR NEW HARD COMPOUND**

*Sepang, April 8th 2011* – Pirelli and all the Formula One teams were exposed to all the elements that Grand Prix racing can offer today, with track temperatures that climbed to 51 degrees centigrade and an ambient temperature of 37 degrees.

Red Bull Racing continued where it left off in Australia, with Mark Webber going fastest during the first morning session, thanks to a time of 1m37.651s that was more than a second and a half quicker than anybody else. In the afternoon, Webber was quickest again with a time of 1m36.876s, this time just five-thousandths of a second faster than Jenson Button's McLaren.

In total the drivers completed 1255 laps during the two free practice sessions, equipped with the usual two sets of hard tyres (nominated as prime) and one set of soft tyres (nominated as option). In addition to the normal allocation, each driver also had two sets of a new experimental hard compound, designed with a slightly different philosophy to make it more stable throughout its operating window.

The 24 drivers taking part in free practice – three of whom are third drivers who will not race on Sunday – were able to give some valuable feedback about the characteristics of the new tyre, which will be evaluated by Pirelli for the purposes of future product development.

Although, like Australia, qualifying and the race will take place during the late afternoon in Malaysia, today's two free practice sessions took place at the usual times: 1000-1130 in the morning and 1400-1530 in the afternoon.

During the morning session, most teams opted to use both types of hard compound tyre. Webber's fastest time in the morning was set using the standard hard compound tyre, denoted by its silver markings. Williams driver Pastor Maldonado completed the longest run with it, setting fifth-fastest time towards the end of a 19-lap stint.

The second session was also dry and held in even warmer conditions. Webber started off on the hard tyre and switched to the softer option to set his quickest time. This was a pattern adopted by most of the field, as they tried to get the best out of their single set of soft tyres on a track that became progressively more rubbered-in.

In general, the soft tyres have proved to be in the region of 1.2 seconds per lap quicker than the hard compound, with a predicted operating range of between eight to 10 laps in the race.

The soft tyres for Malaysia and China, characterised by yellow logos, have been given additional markings in order to distinguish them more clearly. A gold band has been drawn round the circumference of the tyre, which should make the compound easier to spot on television. A revision to the markings, intended to give the colours greater visibility, will be in place for the Turkish Grand Prix in May, when the Formula One season arrives in Europe.

Pirelli Motorsport Director Paul Hembery commented: "Everybody has faced extremely tough conditions during the first day of running in Malaysia. Luckily our tyres have performed faultlessly so far, but of course the real work lies ahead of us as the drivers put their cars into qualifying and race trim. Today, the drivers tried out the evolution of our hard tyres and their response was generally favourable, although we need to be careful that we don't end up with tyres that are too conservative. Given how harsh the conditions were today, we've been pleased with the way that things have gone and we're expecting a three-stop strategy for the race. Obviously there will be some interesting tactical calls from the teams tomorrow when it comes to deciding which tyres they will choose to qualify on. This is just going to add to the spectacle of what is sure to be a fascinating race."

#### **PIRELLI FACT OF THE DAY**

Pirelli's experimental tyre for Sepang was developed at a test last week in Istanbul, which marked Pedro de la Rosa's last outing as Pirelli test driver before returning to his role as third driver at McLaren. Pirelli is running a parallel test programme this year alongside its first season in Formula One. Brazilian driver Lucas di Grassi will take over test driving duties at the next test in Barcelona, scheduled for May.

Tomorrow at Sepang the teams will take part in one more free practice session in the afternoon from 1300-1400, before embarking on qualifying from 1600-1700. Last year's pole time was 1m48.210s, set by Mark Webber (Red Bull) during a rain-affected session. Unusually, Webber set his quickest time during Q2. The lap record is still held by Juan Pablo Montoya, thanks to a time of 1m34.223s set in 2004 with Williams.

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