



VETTEL SETS THE PACE IN CHINA WITH PIRELLI

Shanghai, April 15th 2011 – The 12 Formula One teams have been able to gather some useful data about Pirelli's new PZero tyres during the two free practice sessions at Shanghai today, but with cooler temperatures and the possibility of rain for tomorrow, there are plenty of surprises still in store. Both free practice sessions today were held in ambient temperatures of 27 degrees centigrade and track temperatures of 30 degrees.

The teams used free practice to try out different set-ups, with some drivers running new parts and others carrying out long runs in order to acquire information to formulate race strategies. The winner of the first two grands prix, Red Bull's Sebastian Vettel, was straight on the pace from the very beginning, despite a track that was dusty and dirty, setting fastest time in both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Vettel's fastest time in the morning was 1m38.739s, six-tenths of a second quicker than his team mate Mark Webber, who was runner-up. All the drivers used Pirelli's hard tyres, benefitting from the extra set that they had been given in the morning. In the afternoon, Vettel improved his time to 1m37.688s, this time using the soft tyre. Lewis Hamilton, also on the soft tyre, was second fastest for McLaren, 0.166s slower than Vettel.

The afternoon session ran in identical temperatures of 27 degrees ambient and 30 degrees on track, with Vettel setting a fastest time of 1m37.688. Williams driver Pastor Maldonado was the first driver to switch to soft tyres, 23 minutes into the afternoon session, and was instantly quickest, confirming an expected difference of 1.5 to 2.0 seconds per lap between the soft and the hard tyres.

In total the drivers completed 1.098 laps of the 5.451-kilometre circuit, 458 laps in the first free practice session and 640 laps in the afternoon.

Pirelli's Motorsport Director Paul Hembery commented: "We've been very encouraged by our first day of running in China, which like nearly every one of the circuits this year is entirely new to us. Although today has been warm, degradation is a lot less than we saw in Malaysia, so I'm expecting to have two pit stops per car on race day, similar to Australia. We've also seen a lot fewer 'marbles' – deposits of rubber, with the shape and consistency of toffee, left by the tyres on the track as they degrade – and that should be the case during the race too as we are expecting fewer pit stops in the normal course of events. In terms of wear rate, there's a good five to six lap difference between the soft and the hard, which opens up various different possibilities in terms of strategy. The weather seems uncertain tomorrow, which is sure to add another level of intrigue to what is already shaping up to be a thrilling weekend."

PIRELLI FACT OF THE DAY

Red Bull driver Sebastian Vettel has led 109 of the 114 laps that have comprised the 2011 Formula One season so far. Red Bull has also performed the fastest pit stops of the season to date. The next quickest team is McLaren, which has been on average 0.334 seconds slower per stop, while the third fastest team is Lotus Renault, which has been on average 0.592 seconds slower than Red Bull.

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