

MICHELIN FACES A NEW CHALLENGE AS THE SEASON DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Michelin's final race in the 2020 MotoGP™ season will see a new venue making its debut on the calendar as the championship heads to Portugal and the Algarve International Circuit near Portimao for the Grande Prémio MEO de Portugal.

The 4,592m circuit was opened in November 2008 and its first major event was a WorldSBK race that same year, and it has been a regular feature on the Superbike calendar ever since. The configuration features nine right- and six left-hand corners and a front straight almost a kilometre long. Its rolling layout is quite incredible and the unique downhill descent into turn-one sees that section referred to by many as a 'high-speed rollercoaster'. The complex is not just a racetrack though, as it also features a go-kart track and an off-road park, along with a hotel, an apartment building and a sports centre amongst other things. The track itself boasts a 100,000 capacity, but due to the current protocols the grandstands will be empty for the circuit's Grand Prix debut.

The Portuguese Grand Prix was a late addition to the schedule once it was confirmed that due to COVID-19 restrictions no fly-away races would be staged this season and Michelin recently visited the Algarve International Circuit for a test to acquaint itself with the championship's latest track. The test saw the full-time riders use street-bikes with Michelin Power Performance tyres on them - which are commercial slick tyres - so as not to contravene the regulations, whilst the test riders were able to use the MotoGP machines fitted with MICHELIN Power Slicks. This test was conducted shortly after the circuit had had a complete resurfacing, so the Michelin technicians and tyre designers were able to gather a lot of data to enable them to choose the most ideal compounds to match the demands of the asphalt and the layout of the track.

Armed with the relevant information, Michelin has chosen a range of MICHELIN Power Slicks for its racing debut at the circuit and has also instigated the ruling which allows it to bring four different compounds rather than the usual three. The allocation will feature a soft, medium and hard front in a symmetric design with a second hard compound having an asymmetric finish, with a harder right-hand side. The rear selection will see soft, medium and hard asymmetric tyres, with the harder right shoulder to cope with the extra turns that go in that direction, along with another hard specification, this time with a symmetric finish. Temperatures and weather conditions in the Algarve in November are still very pleasant, but due to its location close to the Atlantic Ocean, there is also a chance of winter storms and wet weather. With this possibility MICHELIN Power Rain tyres will be available; these will be soft and medium symmetric front and a soft and medium rear with an asymmetric design the same as their slick counterparts.

Michelin will take to the track on Friday 20th November for the first Free Practice period when the MotoGP riders will get their opening competitive taste of the circuit with an extended 70-minute session, which will also be the same for the afternoon's Free Practice. Saturday's schedule will revert to normal lengths, with Qualifying taking place in the afternoon to decide grid positions. Sunday's final race of 2020 will be a 25-lap affair, that will see the lights change to signal go at 14.00hrs local time (15.00hrs CET, 14.00hrs UTC).



Piero Taramasso - Michelin Motorsport Two-Wheel Manager:

“This is an exciting way to bring the season to a climax, with a visit to a brand new circuit and the challenge faced by that. It is always a very intriguing and intense time when we go somewhere for the first time, as we only have test data so are somewhat working blind without any substantial race information. That said though, we had a really good and positive test both with the MotoGP racers on road bikes and the test riders using the machines that will be raced this weekend and we have chosen the compounds based on the data gathered from all riders and motorcycles. The track looks very spectacular and we are looking forward to racing there. It’s a shame there won’t be any spectators to make it a real season ending race, but in today’s climate this is something we have to accept and Michelin will be doing all it can to give all the fans watching at home a really good race to see out this unusual year.”



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