

***MICHELIN AND VIÑALES OVERCOME THE VAGARIES OF THE WEATHER AT THE OPENING ROUND***

Michelin witnessed Maverick Viñales secure victory at today's opening round of the 2017 MotoGP™ World Championship season as he rode a perfectly timed race during the Grand Prix of Qatar from Losail this evening.

Viñales (Movistar Yamaha MotoGP) was making his debut with his new team and despite the weather trying its best to spoil the event, the young Spaniard raced to victory after an enthralling and delayed race. Today's grid lined up using the combined practice times from the first three sessions, after all of Saturday's proceedings - including the qualifying - was cancelled following heavy rain on Friday night leaving the track in an unsafe condition.

The unusual climate that forced Saturday's cancellation, almost ruined this evening's race as rain began to fall just as the bikes lined up for the start, this caused a delay and the race length to be reduced to 20-laps. Once the lights changed, Andrea Iannone (Team SUZUKI ECSTAR) got the holeshot from second on the grid, as he passed pole-setter Viñales going into turn one. As the first circulation drew to close last season's Moto2™ Champion Johann Zarco (Monster Yamaha Tech 3) had moved into the lead, a position he held until lap-seven when the rookie strayed slightly off the racing line and crashed as he lost traction on the dusty and dirty part of the track. Andrea Dovizioso (Ducati Team) then inherited the top-spot and pushed hard at the front to try to open a gap, he was chased down by Viñales, with Valentino Rossi (Movistar Yamaha MotoGP) in contention close behind. There then ensued an exciting battle for the victory as the Viñales and Dovizioso changed places at the front as the race wore on. Viñales eventually made the decisive move toward the end of the race when he used his new profile medium compound front MICHELIN Power Slick to its full extent as he out-braked Dovizioso. The Italian followed him home for second, with Rossi filling the final place on the podium.

Michelin had the new profile front tyres at Losail this weekend which are designed for improved corner grip at full lean angle and these were combined with the latest construction of rear MICHELIN Power Slick developed to give greater drivability for improved acceleration. With the option of three compounds for both front and rear, this produced different pairing right through the field, with four of the six specifications being used in the race.

The battle further down the field saw 2016 World Champion Marc Marquez (Repsol Honda Team) take fourth ahead of team-mate Dani Pedrosa (Repsol Honda Team) in fifth. Sixth place went to Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia Racing Team Gresini) along with the First Independent Team Rider honours. Scott Redding (OCTO Pramac Racing) and Jack Miller (EG 0,0 Marc VDS) finished in seventh and eighth respectively, with Alex Rins (Team SUZUKI ECSTAR) taking ninth on his MotoGP premier class debut. Jonas Folger (Monster Yamaha Tech 3) - also making his debut - rounded out the top-ten.

Michelin will now make the trip across the equator as it heads to Argentina for round two of the championship at the Termas de Rio Hondo circuit on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April.



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### **Maverick Viñales – Movistar Yamaha MotoGP:**

“All weekend the tyres have worked really good and for the race I choose the ones that Michelin proposed to me and this was really the right decision. For me the tyres have improved from last year and I feel great on this type of tyre. I hope we can continue like this for the season because for me, my riding style and the bike it feels really good. I always feel very happy with Michelin, I think we still have some work to do, but I am very pleased with what has been done already.”

### **Piero Taramasso – Manager of the Two-Wheel Motorsport Group:**

“It has been a very eventful weekend here in Qatar, after losing a whole day and then the race being on and off like it was, it was very pleasing to finally get it started and have no interruptions. Our new tyres have worked very well here, despite the conditions. On the first day Maverick was 0.6 inside the lap-record and I’m sure if the weather hadn’t been as difficult as it was we would have seen some even faster times. We brought six specifications here and five were used throughout the practices and four today, so it again shows we are giving the riders a choice that is then free for them to decide what they use. The race was very consistent and it also produced some exciting racing through the whole pack. We were especially pleased to see the rookies; Zarco, Folger and Rins adapting to our tyres so quickly during the weekend and seeing the confidence that they had to push with them We will now head to Argentina, where we are certainly ready for the challenge!”



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