

Losail circuit, Qatar, Saturday 10th March, 2007

KONICA MINOLTA Honda secures top 10 finish at season opener

KONICA MINOLTA Honda rider Shinya Nakano made a steady start to his 2007 MotoGP campaign with a hard-fought tenth place at the Losail circuit in Qatar. The 29-year-old Japanese rider made good his promise of wanting to finish the first race with some points in what promises to be a long, gruelling season. Shinya spent most of the race in good company, battling with Chris Vermeulen, Alex Barros and 2006 World Champion Nicky Hayden. The race was won by Ducati's Casey Stoner; marking the 21-year-old Australian's debut victory in the MotoGP class. The MotoGP circus now heads to Europe for the Spanish Grand Prix in Jerez over the weekend of 23rd-25th March.

Gianluca Montiron – Team Manager KONICA MINOLTA Honda

"Obviously we are disappointed with our final position but we need to be positive about what we have learned about our new machine and the tyres. For Shinya it was important to get used to the feeling of the bike with worn tyres and low fuel-load towards the end of the race, as you can only do so many race simulations during the winter. Now we need to analyse the data from this first race and work hard with our partners Honda, HRC and Michelin to improve our overall package so Shinya can fight with the top riders. This is our aim, so we are all looking forward to the next race in Jerez."

Shinya Nakano – Rider, KONICA MINOLTA Honda (Final position – 10th)

"Well I at least did what I said I would do and cross the line and get some points, which is so important in such a long season. My start was not so good, but I soon got into a good rhythm. I benefited from a number of people crashing out and soon spent most of the race battling with Nicky Hayden and Chris Vermeulen. I so wanted to catch and pass both of these riders but unfortunately I didn't have the lap times to do it. I think we really needed to be around half a second a lap faster to be competitive where we deserve to be, but we finished the race and learned a lot about the bike, which is so important."

Giulio Bernardelle – Technical Director, KONICA MINOLTA Honda

"We had to work hard in morning warm-up as the crash yesterday meant that we had to make our tyre choice for the race this morning. We ended up going with the medium compound tyre, which I think was the same choice as most of the other Honda/Michelin riders. By analysing the data, we know what our main problem is. Through the series of fast right-hand corners, which includes turn 13 where Shinya crashed yesterday, he couldn't push very hard at all. Shinya has a good feeling with the front tyre but we need to improve the grip from both the front and the rear tyres for him to be able to push harder in the faster corners. We now need to work with Michelin to rectify this situation and from there improve our mechanical grip levels. Also it was clear today that the Ducatis and Suzukis are very fast, so we need something more from Honda from the engine to be more competitive. I'm still very positive as we have identified our problem through the data and the Team and our technicians can now work on this before we head to Spain for the second race of the season. Also, Jerez is a slower circuit, without many long straights so I think this track may suit us a little more."

Qatar MotoGP race final positions

1) Casey Stoner	Ducati	43'02.788"
2) Valentino Rossi	Yamaha	43'05.626"
3) Dani Pedrosa	Honda	43'11.318"
4) John Hopkins	Suzuki	43'11.859"
5) Marco Melandri	Honda	43'20.221"
10) Shinya Nakano	Honda	43'31.244"

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