



Vettel (centre) is now third in the drivers' race after his victory at Sepang. AP

## MOTOR RACING

# Vettel's third time lucky

He powers Red Bull to a one-two finish at Malaysian Grand Prix as favourites wilt

IAN DE COTTA

ian@mediacorp.com.sg

SEPANG — Formula 1 circuit designer Hermann Tilke was perspiring buckets in the sweltering heat before the Malaysian Grand Prix yesterday and wondered if it would rain, like it did without fail in the late afternoon over the previous three days.

But the 54-year-old's money was not on Michael Schumacher, who has a reputation of reigning in the wet. Chatting on the possible outcome of the race, he told this reporter it was too early for his compatriot to make an impact, having just returned from a three-year lay-off.

Instead, he had a stake on another German, Sebastian Vettel, rain or shine.

Unexpectedly, the weather failed to live up to its promise and on the dry track, Schumacher, driving a Mercedes GP car, lagged and had to drop out after only 35 minutes because of mechanical failure.

Instead, Vettel, in a Red Bull, came through for Tilke in a faultless race that saw him steal the lead from team-mate and pole-sitter Mark Webber in the race to the first turn to take the 12th Malaysian Grand Prix without trouble.

Webber made it a one-two for the Austrian team and Nico Rosberg saved Mercedes the blushes with third.

Vettel is now level on points, but third behind Ferrari's Fernando Alonso in the drivers' championship. The Italian team had a weekend to forget, but Alonso's team-mate, Felipe Massa, now leads the pack after finishing seventh.

Vettel's championship hopes are back on track after back-to-back technical problems in the first two races in Bahrain and Australia robbed him of victories.

But the 22-year-old was not overly surprised Red Bull delivered this time.

"We didn't have great races at the start, we didn't do the best job we could. But this is life because we build cars to go on the limit and sometimes something breaks. So, the result here today was important for us. We got good points because it wasn't the easiest race for Ferrari and McLaren," said Vettel.

Despite the service of front-running cars, the blame for Ferrari and McLaren's nightmare weekend lies squarely on the tactical staff's indecision in the rain during qualifying, which left their respective drivers struggling from the back of the grid.

While McLaren's Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button did well to climb to 6th and 8th in the end, Alonso was left fuming after suffering gearbox problems and then a blown engine with two laps remaining.

### MALAYSIAN GRAND PRIX

1 Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 2 Mark Webber (Red Bull) 3 Nico Rosberg (Mercedes GP) 4 Robert Kubica (Renault) 5 Adrian Sutil (Force India) 6 Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 7 Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 8 Jenson Button (McLaren) 9 Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 10 Nico Hulkenberg (Williams F1)

### DRIVERS

1 Massa 39.0pts 2 Alonso 37.0 3 Vettel 37.0 4 Button 35.0 5 Rosberg 35.0 6 Hamilton 31.0 7 Kubica 30.0 8 Webber 24.0 9 Sutil 10.0 10 Schumacher 9.0

### CONSTRUCTORS

1 Ferrari 76.0pts 2 McLaren 66.0 3 Red Bull 61.0 4 Mercedes GP 44.0 5 Renault 30.0 6 Force India 18.0 7 Williams F1 6.0 8 Toro Rosso 2.0

His problems are symptomatic of Ferrari of two years ago when early season missteps in the back-room cost Massa to lose the world title to Hamilton by only a point.

With the strongest pairing in the grid, this is their best chance of returning to their glory days from 2000-2004 when Schumacher ruled the roost with them.

But team principal Stefano Domenicali needs to pin down the problem quickly before they head to Shanghai in a fortnight.

Said Massa: "We need to improve the car race by race because Red Bull are very strong and so are McLaren.

"It's always very nice to lead the championship, but we still have 16 races to go and we need to keep our feet on the ground."

## Bradley has them singing *Majulah Singapura*

SEPANG — For the first time since the inaugural Malaysian Grand Prix in 1999, fans got to hear the Singapore national anthem twice in the span of two days at the Sepang International Circuit, thanks to Singapore-based teenager Richard Bradley.

Competing in the supporting Formula BMW Pacific race, the 19-year-old English lad captured the first two rounds of the 16-leg championship held over the weekend.

Bradley, who was making his debut in open-wheel racing with the Eurasia team, won the first round on Saturday when he crossed the finish line ahead of Spaniard Carlos Sainz Jr, son of two-time World Rally Champion of the same name, and Fahmi Ilyas of Malaysia.

Bradley finished the 10-lap race in 22min 2.686sec and also set the fastest lap (2:11.139). He repeated the feat in the second round yesterday, clocking 22:20.522, ahead of Colombian Oscar Tunjo of the Meritus team and Japan's Kotaro Sakurai (Eurasia).

"I am really thrilled. To win the first two rounds and setting the fastest lap times in both of them in my open-wheel debut is more than what I had expected," said Bradley.

"I hope Singaporeans are just as proud that the national anthem was played twice for the first time at the Malaysian Grand Prix here."

Bradley arrived last November to join dad Edward, a lawyer in Singapore, and with experience in karting since the age of eight, immediately got down to training aspiring young racers at the new karting track in Jurong.

He was granted a racing licence by the Singapore Motor Sports Association when he applied to compete in the Formula BMW Pacific championships.

Asked if he intends to continue flying the Singapore flag well into the future, he replied: "Well I love every bit of Singapore, even if I have been there only a short time, and that is something I won't mind considering."

IAN DE COTTA



Bradley set the fastest lap times in the first two rounds of the Formula BMW Pacific race. PHOTO COURTESY OF RICHARD BRADLEY

SPORTS BETTING			
League	Home Team	Away Team	Match KickOff (Singapore date/time)
S.League	Bal Khalsa	Woodlands	Mon, 05/04/10 7.45pm
Asian FC Cup	Geylang	Thai Port	Tue, 06/04/10 7.30pm

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