

= 2015 Malaysian Grand Prix =

The 2015 Malaysian Grand Prix , formally titled the 2015 Formula 1 Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix , was a Formula One motor race that was held on 29 March 2015 at the Sepang International Circuit in Kuala Lumpur , Malaysia . It was the seventeenth running of the Malaysian Grand Prix as a World Championship event , and thirty @-@ fifth overall .

Lewis Hamilton came into the race leading the Drivers ' championship by seven points over team @-@ mate Nico Rosberg , followed closely by Sebastian Vettel , a further three points adrift . Mercedes entered with a twenty @-@ eight point lead over Ferrari in the Constructors ' championship campaign .

Hamilton secured pole position in a rain @-@ soaked qualifying session , the 40th pole position in his career . Vettel won the race , having started from second place on the grid . It was the 40th victory of his career , and the first victory for Ferrari since the 2013 Spanish Grand Prix .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

Going into the weekend , Lewis Hamilton was leading the Drivers ' Championship , having won the first race ahead of his teammate Nico Rosberg and Sebastian Vettel . He therefore had 25 points and held a seven @-@ point advantage over Rosberg , with Vettel another three points behind . In the constructors ' standings , Mercedes was on top , haven taken the maximum available 43 points from their 1 @-@ 2 finish in Melbourne . Ferrari were second on 15 points , followed by Sauber with 14 .

Mercedes arrived at the second race of the season with maximum points from Australia , having finished first and second with third placed Sebastian Vettel half a minute down . Following their dominant performance , many commentators voiced fears that the sport might become even more one @-@ sided and boring over the course of the 2015 season than it had been the previous year . Red Bull 's team principal Christian Horner called for the FIA to step in and apply rule changes that would level the competition , stating : " The FIA , within the rules , have an equalisation mechanism and that needs to be looked at . " Red Bull subsequently threatened to leave the sport , should no measures be taken . While many commentators pointed out that Red Bull had enjoyed their own share of dominance in the prior years , Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone voiced understanding for the team , saying : " There is a rule that I think [ former president ] Max [ Mosley ] put in when he was there that in the event ... that a particular team or engine supplier did something magic - which Mercedes have done - the FIA can level up things . They [ Mercedes ] have done a first class job which everybody acknowledges . We need to change things a little bit now and try to level things up a little bit . " Mercedes ' executive director Toto Wolff reacted to the calls by urging his rivals to " get your fucking head down and work to sort it out " . McLaren driver Jenson Button also raised doubt over the practicality of rule changes , saying " There 's nothing really to ban because it doesn 't look like Mercedes are doing anything other teams aren 't doing . "

Following criticism voiced by Red Bull , the future of engine supplier Renault was also a matter of debate . While Renault contemplated exiting the sport , another scenario that received media attention was a possible buy @-@ out of the Toro Rosso team . The discussion about the future of the sport was additionally fuelled by the news that the German Grand Prix would be dropped from the 2015 calendar , due to a lack of financing . The exclusion of one of motorsport 's most traditional events caused many to raise the question whether the same fate might await other traditional venues such as Monza .

Fernando Alonso returned from his pre @-@ season injury to take back his seat at McLaren , which had been filled by Kevin Magnussen at the previous race in Australia . Also returning was Williams driver Valtteri Bottas , who missed the previous race due to a back injury sustained during qualifying .

Manor Marussia , who were able to field their cars for the first time in Malaysia , were under criticism after they failed to run their cars at the Australian Grand Prix , with Ecclestone saying they would need to pay for their travel expenses , which are usually covered by the commercial rights holder .

As in the previous two years , Pirelli announced they would be supplying teams with the orange @-@ banded hard compound tyre as the prime selection and the white @-@ banded medium compound as the option selection for the event . The event also made use of Pirelli 's two wet weather tyres , the green @-@ banded intermediate and blue @-@ banded full wet tyres .

= = = Free practice = = =

Per the regulations for the 2015 season , three practice sessions were held , two 90 @-@ minute sessions on Friday and another one @-@ hour session before qualifying on Saturday . Nico Rosberg set the fastest time in the first practice session on Friday morning , while championship leader Lewis Hamilton was sidelined due to engine problems . He recovered to take fastest time in the second session of the day , while Ferrari proved that they would be closer to their rivals in Sepang , coming within 0 @.@ 4 seconds in both free practice sessions .

Fernando Alonso made his debut in the new McLaren , finishing 14th and 16th in the two Friday sessions respectively , outpacing teammate Jenson Button both times . Also debuting during free practice were Manor @-@ Marussia , with both cars struggling to meet the time limit of 107 % . Raffaele Marciello filled in for Sauber @-@ regular Felipe Nasr during the first session .

During the third practice session on Saturday morning , both Mercedes drivers were once again fastest , with Rosberg setting the fastest time , while Ferrari was about half a second behind .

= = = Qualifying = = =

Qualifying consisted of three parts , 18 , 15 and 12 minutes in length respectively , with five drivers eliminated from competing after each of the first two sessions . The first part of qualifying ( Q1 ) got under way in the dry and sunny conditions ; this was not the conditions that would favour McLaren as they were still off the pace of the midfield although they made progress . Jenson Button along with his returning team @-@ mate Fernando Alonso were separated by only a tenth of a second , but were 17th and 18th on the grid . Joining them were the Manor @-@ Marussia cars of Roberto Merhi and Will Stevens ; Merhi recorded a time that was almost five seconds slower than Alonso , and Stevens failed to take to the circuit , while Felipe Nasr also failed to make it out of Q1 , as he struggled for balance in his Sauber .

Clouds built up at the west of the circuit before Q2 and there was a traffic jam in the pit lane . A scramble for position started to be evident and only one driver ? Nico Rosberg ? managed a clean lap without traffic , as the rest of the field dealt with the thunderstorm that was warned to arrive during Q2 and started tripping up on each other . The biggest casualty of the session was Ferrari 's Kimi Räikkönen who got held up by Marcus Ericsson . Räikkönen recorded a lap of 1 : 42 @.@ 173 , which was not fast enough to get into Q3 as rain started soon after . Joining Räikkönen were Pastor Maldonado , the Force Indias of Nico Hülkenberg and Sergio Pérez and the Toro Rosso of Carlos Sainz , Jr . , as they could not improve on their original lap times due to the conditions .

After a delay of half an hour , the cars returned to the circuit , with the majority of the remaining ten drivers on intermediate tyres , while Romain Grosjean , Felipe Massa and Valtteri Bottas initially surveyed the circuit on wets before switching to the intermediates . Ultimately , Hamilton took pole by 0 @.@ 074 seconds ahead of Vettel , with Rosberg third . They were followed by the Red Bull cars of Daniel Ricciardo and Daniil Kvyat , while Toro Rosso 's young driver Max Verstappen took sixth place . The rest of the top ten was completed by Massa , Grosjean , Bottas and Ericsson . After qualifying , Romain Grosjean was found to have left the pit lane in a different position to the one he left the garage , and so he received a two place grid penalty dropping him to tenth on the grid .

=== Race ===

Temperatures on race day were very hot , with the track temperature at 61 ° C ( 142 ° F ) . Rain was possible , though less than in previous years , also due to the earlier starting time . Williams were hoping for a dry race , since qualifying showed they were still off the pace in wet conditions . Will Stevens , who missed qualifying due to a fuel system problem , was ultimately unable to participate in the race . Approximately 44 @, @ 611 people attended the race .

At the start , Lewis Hamilton got away well , while Nico Rosberg challenged Sebastian Vettel for second place , but the Ferrari was able to come out on top . Both Pastor Maldonado and Kimi Räikkönen suffered punctures on lap one after contact with Valtteri Bottas and Felipe Nasr respectively and had to come in for a new set of tyres . Vettel was able to stay with the Mercedes of Hamilton over the first few laps . On lap four , Marcus Ericsson braked too late and spun in turn one , retiring from the race and bringing out the safety car . All but seven cars went into the pits to change tyres , including both Mercedes drivers , while Sebastian Vettel stayed out . When racing resumed on lap seven , Vettel led Nico Hülkenberg , Romain Grosjean , Carlos Sainz , Jr. and Sergio Pérez , with Hamilton the first of the cars who made pit stops right behind .

Both Mercedes cars now made their way through the field , with Hamilton overtaking Hülkenberg for second position on the end of lap ten , now ten seconds down on race leader Vettel . Rosberg reached third position on lap 14 , while Hamilton was unable to make significant gains on Vettel in front . The cars that had not used the safety car phase for their stops began to change tyres on lap 16 , while Maldonado was handed a ten @-@ second penalty for exceeding the safety car time . Meanwhile , the Red Bull cars showed signs of brake problems with brake dust exiting the wheels at the major braking points on both cars . Vettel came in for his first stop on lap 18 , handing the lead back to Hamilton . Vettel rejoined in third place and began to close rapidly on second @-@ placed Rosberg . Vettel made good use of his fresher tyres , overtaking Rosberg on lap 22 and setting out to do the same on Hamilton , when the latter went into the pits for his second pit stop on lap 24 . Meanwhile , Fernando Alonso retired due to engine problems on lap 21 while running in ninth place . With deteriorating front wing damage , Daniel Ricciardo let his teammate Daniil Kvyat through into eleventh place on the beginning of lap 26 , only for Kvyat to be sent in a spin by Hülkenberg , who ran wide and hit the Red Bull in turn two . Kvyat was able to continue , though down in 13th place . The other Force India of Pérez sent Romain Grosjean 's Lotus into a spin five laps later . Both Force India drivers were handed a ten @-@ second penalty for their actions .

Vettel made a pit stop for a second and final time on lap 38 , handing the lead back to Hamilton , who came in for his final stop a lap later , emerging about twelve seconds behind Vettel in third place . His teammate Rosberg made a pit stop on lap 41 , elevating Hamilton to second , who now started to close on Vettel . Jenson Button retired from the race on lap 40 due to a turbo failure , while Maldonado 's bad day turned worse when he had to park his car suffering brake failures . Hamilton was unable to overcome the gap between himself and Vettel , leaving Vettel to take his first victory since the 2013 Brazilian Grand Prix and his first with Ferrari . Bottas was able to overtake his teammate Felipe Massa on the final lap , after both Williams drivers had an uneventful race to finish fifth and sixth respectively .

=== Post @-@ race ===

Sebastian Vettel and Ferrari reacted emotionally to the victory , with Vettel unable to hold back tears on the podium . Speaking about the experience as a Ferrari driver , he told Eddie Jordan during the podium interview :

I remember when the gate opened in Maranello it was like a dream coming true . I remember the last time I was there was as a young kid watching Michael [ Schumacher ] over the fence driving around in the Ferrari and now I 'm driving that very red car . It 's incredible . The day today , the race , really spot on , the whole team was there , great strategy , great pace , we beat them fair and square [ ... ] .

Second placed Lewis Hamilton conceded that Ferrari and Vettel " did a fantastic job this weekend "

and that he had not expected them to be as quick as they were .

The Ferrari team shared Vettel 's enthusiasm , as they could be seen singing along to the Italian national anthem during the podium ceremony , led by team principal Maurizio Arrivabene . He later admitted he cried after receiving a congratulatory text message from Michael Schumacher 's manager on behalf of his family . Comparisons between Vettel and Schumacher were omnipresent in the following days , with commentators pointing out that it took Vettel merely two races for his first win with the Scuderia , while Schumacher achieved a victory only in his seventh race . During the post @-@ race press conference , Vettel expressed hope to emulate Schumacher 's success at Ferrari and win the world championship .

The result was viewed as a welcome rebuttal of the fears of monotony voiced after the Australian Grand Prix . German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung declared Vettel 's win was " the best the flagging sport could have hoped for " . The Daily Mail commented : " Now a sport that has developed an impressive aptitude for navel @-@ gazing , [ ... ] can rest from its self @-@ loathing criticism , at least for a while . "

Controversy arose when Force India 's Bob Fernley accused Manor Marussia of intentionally only running one car during qualifying and the race and urged the FIA to investigate the matter . Manor rejected these claims , with sporting director Graeme Lowdon saying " I can guarantee you if that car could have moved , it would have raced " .

Finishing seventh , Max Verstappen became the youngest driver to score World Championship points . Verstappen was quoted saying that it had been a " good day " , while his father , former Formula One driver Jos Verstappen , commented : " I 'm very pleased for what he has done today . I 'm happy that he finished the race and the way he raced , he deserved it . I 'm very proud . "

As a result of the race , Vettel moved within three points of Hamilton in the Drivers ' Championship , on 43 to 40 points . Rosberg followed in third with 33 points , 13 ahead of Felipe Massa . In the Constructors ' Championship , Mercedes retained their lead at now 76 points , 24 clear of Ferrari , with Williams following in third on 30 points .

= = Classification = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

Notes

^ 1 ? Romain Grosjean received a two place grid penalty for failing to " leave the pitlane in the order of his arrival . "

^ 2 ? Roberto Merhi and Will Stevens were granted permission to start by race stewards .

= = = Race = = =

= = = Championship standings after the race = = =

Note : Only the top five positions are included for both sets of standings .