



## PRESS RELEASE

### SINGAPORE'S MAJOR FORMULA ONE MILESTONE

#### **New race on 2008 calendar is 800th in World Championship history**

*10 September 2008* - On September 28 2008 Singapore's new 5.067-km Grand Prix track will have the honour of staging its first Grand Prix – which by a happy coincidence is also the 800th in the 59-year history of the FIA FORMULA ONE World Championship™.

Since the day in mid-May 1950 when Giuseppe Farina won the first-ever World Championship race in his Alfa-Romeo at Silverstone in England, the series has grown from its Eurocentric origins into the 18-round worldwide competition which we see in 2008.

Not every one of the previous 799 races has been called a 'Grand Prix', either. The World Championship's early concession to racing outside Europe was to include the fabled Indianapolis 500 on the calendar, where it stayed from 1950 to 1960 inclusive without attracting the cream of other countries' Grand Prix crop.

But the 10 men who won Indy in those years (Bill Vukovich won it twice) must be counted as winners of World Championship events – and there are now 100 of those. As of August 3rd, 2008, to be precise: that's when Heikki Kovalainen claimed his maiden Grand Prix success for McLaren-Mercedes in Hungary, making the 26-year-old Finn the 100th winner of a World Championship race.

No fewer than 19 of those 100 winners' names are British – if, that is, we decide not to break them down by individual countries as English, Scottish or Irish (no Welshman has won a World Championship race). If we do, then 13 are English, four Scots and two from Ireland.

And if we do, then we leave Italy out in the lead with the highest number of race-winners from a single country. Since Farina earned undying fame in that first 1950 race, a total of 15 Italians have won World Championship events. The most successful was Alberto Ascari with 13 Grand Prix wins en route to his two Drivers' World Championships in 1952-53, when Formula One™ was run to F2 regulations and Ferrari just happened to have the best cars for the job.

The Americans can claim 15 World Championship race-winners of their own, but if we excise those Indianapolis 500, their list comes back to just five.

That leaves France as the only other country with a winners' list in double figures. The first Frenchman to win a World Championship race was Maurice Trintignant at Monaco back in 1955; the most recent, and France's 12th winner, was Olivier Panis, also at Monaco in 1996, when he stole an unexpected win for French-based team Ligier, now part of Formula One™ history.

The most famous French driver of all, of course, is Alain Prost. With the physique of a scrum-half and the physiognomy of a boxer, Prost also had the intelligence that earned him the nickname 'The Professor' as he racked up 51 race wins and four world titles between 1981 and 1993.

Over half a century of victories! Never, we all thought, could that record possibly be bettered. Oh, no? Along came a young German, who started winning races in 1992; by the time he left at the end of 2006 he had stolen not only Prost's record but every other one in the World Championship book.

Michael Schumacher's genius first came to light when he out-qualified veteran team-mate Andrea de Cesaris on his first World Championship appearance, with Jordan at the Belgian Grand Prix of 1991. Within four years 'Schumi' was a double World Champion.

Like Prost, he was his country's first title-winner. But not only did he better Prost's winning record, he annihilated it: 91 victories, the first in Belgium in 1992, the last in China in 2006, and with them no fewer than seven world titles, more even than the man usually considered the greatest of them all, Argentine Juan Manuel Fangio.

Fangio, with 24 race wins and five titles, dominated the World Championship's first decade; Britain was the country to beat in its second, as men like Clark, Surtees, Stewart and Graham Hill held sway; the Seventies saw Lauda of Austria and Ferrari lord it over the field; by the Eighties it was Piquet, Prost and the brilliant Brazilian called Senna who were in command; and the Nineties saw the title see-saw to and fro between Brazil, France, Britain, Germany, Canada and Finland as no one man could claim to rule the roost.

One man – Schumacher, naturally – most certainly could with five straight titles at the start of the 21st century. But the change in the World Championship is obvious when we consider that the first decade of the new century has also seen Spain produce its first World Champion, the superbly gifted Fernando Alonso, and a new British star rising in the shape of Lewis Hamilton.

This year alone has given us not one, but two new winners. Kovalainen, from a country with a proud motor sport tradition, was one; before him, at the Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal, it was the exciting Robert Kubica's turn, the first Polish driver to win a World Championship Grand Prix.

And so to World Championship race number 800. Its winner will add his name to a fabulous list of men who marked the previous F1 milestones. The 100th race in 1961 was won by Englishman Stirling Moss, 'the greatest driver never to win the World Championship'; the 200th in 1971 went to Scotland's Jackie Stewart – both men since knighted for their services to the sport.

The 300th event in 1978 was won by pugnacious Swede Ronnie Peterson, later killed at Monza; Niki Lauda claimed F1's 400th race, appropriately at Austria's fabled Oesterreichring in 1984; Nelson Piquet took number 500 in Australia in 1990; Jacques Villeneuve was the winner of the 600th in 1997; and Giancarlo Fisichella was the unlikely but no less worthy winner of the 700th in Brazil in 2003.

Seven previous milestones, all marked in different countries; seven races won by seven men of seven different nationalities, if we allow Moss and Stewart to be English and Scottish respectively. Whose name, which nation will it be when Singapore celebrates the magical 800th?

**About 2008 FORMULA 1™ SingTel Singapore Grand Prix**

The inaugural 2008 FORMULA 1™ SingTel Singapore Grand Prix will take place on 28 September 2008 on a street circuit of public roads around the Marina Bay area. The race will be the first held at night in FORMULA 1™ history and is the first street race in Asia.

**About Singapore GP Pte Ltd**

Singapore GP Pte Ltd is the race promoter for the FORMULA 1™ SingTel Singapore Grand Prix. It holds five-year renewable rights to stage the Singapore Grand Prix, beginning with the 2008 Season. The company is a partnership between Komoco Motors and regional events company Lushington Entertainments, via its parent company Reef Enterprises.

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