

# Alonso turns rookie for test with Toyota

Manama

**Double Formula** One world champion Fernando Alonso turned rookie for a day yesterday when he tried out Toyota's world endurance championship car in a test that could lead to a Le Mans 24 Hours entry next year.

The 36-year-old McLaren driver completed 113 laps of the Bahrain International Circuit in the TS050 hybrid for a total distance of 611km.

The end-of-season test came a day after Toyota won the Six Hours of Bahrain race at the track.

"It was a great day. Testing an LMP1 (Le Mans top tier) car is always a nice thing for any racing driver because these cars are amazing to drive," Alonso said in a Toyota statement.

"They are very consistent throughout a stint which is a positive thing. I have wanted to test a car like this for a long time now and today I could achieve that so I am happy," added the Spaniard.

Alonso, who will be racing in Formula One's Abu Dhabi season-ender next weekend, posted a best time of one minute 43.013 which compared to a 1:42.38 set by Toyota regular Mike Conway.

The Spaniard had visited Toyota's Cologne factory in Germany on Nov. 7 for a seat fitting and simulator session.

McLaren are partnered by Honda, Toyota's big domestic auto industry rivals, but that relationship will terminate at the end of this season -- leaving Alonso free to race for Toyota at Le Mans without contractual problems should he secure a drive.

Le Mans in June does not clash with any Formula One commitments.

Toyota have yet to confirm their continuation in the endurance championship, with champions Porsche pulling out, but are expected to stay as favourites to win Le Mans.

Alonso, who competed in this year's Indianapolis 500, has set his sights on completing the so-called Triple Crown of motorsport.

The feat, only achieved by the late British driver Graham Hill, involves winning Indianapolis, The Le Mans 24 Hours sportscar car and the Formula One world championship. (Reuters)

Fernando Alonso (file pic)

## Hamilton warned Vettel about 'disrespect'



Lewis Hamilton (L) with Sebastian Vettel (file pic)

London

**Lewis Hamilton** has revealed what he said to Sebastian Vettel after their clash at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix earlier in the season.

Vettel accused Hamilton of brake-testing him during the Safety Car period in Baku and responded by driving up alongside the Mercedes and hitting his car from the side.

Hamilton's data showed no evidence that he did force a collision between the two rivals and Vettel was given a 10-second stop/go penalty which some thought was a little lenient.

Hamilton and Vettel spoke to each other about the incident after the race, with the Brit warning Vettel not to disrespect him again.

"When I spoke to him later, I was like 'that's a sign of disrespect, so don't ever disrespect me like that again otherwise then we will have

problems'," said Hamilton when discussing his reaction.

"I've never done that to someone. I don't even know what he was thinking to have done... I've never been in a position like that. "I guess people react differently under certain pressures."

Hamilton said that the incident could have easily distracted him from his "ultimate goal" of winning the World Championship but he was not prepared to let Vettel do that.

"I think there's different ways in which you can handle things," added Hamilton.

"I knew what I was there to do and I wasn't going to let anything distract me from doing that.

"I wasn't going to let myself say something or react in a way that's going to cause some negative swirl which is going to steer me off course from my ultimate goal. (planetf1)

## We should have a strong car in Abu Dhabi, says Ricciardo

London

**Red Bull** Racing driver Daniel Ricciardo is hoping he can repeat his feat of breaking his podium duck in Japan, at the 2017 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix season finale, this coming weekend.

"Yas Marina has actually been one of my favourite tracks over the years. It's been a bit like Suzuka for me though, a track that I've always enjoyed and gone well on but not quite reached the podium at.

"I broke that trend in Suzuka this year so hopefully I can do the same in Abu Dhabi."

The Australian enjoys driving at the Yas Marina Circuit, with its end of season vibe, and eerie twilight setting making it a special event.

The only beef the Red Bull driver has with the

race weekend, is that the practice sessions all take part during the day but they race in the evening, which means the data they collect is not particularly representative, and so you cannot really read anything into performance.

"It's a fun track to drive, I like the twilight thing and I guess because it's the end of the season it's even more enjoyable.

"We practice in the daylight but race at twilight which makes things more challenging. You generally don't look too much into the sunlight sessions because in the evenings, when it counts, the track cools down and the car changes so much.

"I wouldn't say they are wasted sessions but you do have to take them with a pinch of salt."

Ricciardo is hoping to end the season on a high with a win in Abu Dhabi, and feels they should definitely have the car to do that. (thecheckeredflag.co.uk)

