

SPORTS

sports

Alonso returns to F1 with Renault 'family'



Fernando Alonso reacts after a race (file photo)

AFP | London

Two-time world champion Fernando Alonso will return to Formula One with Renault for the 2021 season, the team announced.

"Renault DP World F1 Team is pleased to confirm Fernando Alonso alongside Esteban Ocon in its driver line-up for the 2021 season," Renault said in a statement.

Alonso, who has notched up 32 wins and 97 podiums in 314 Grand Prix starts, will replace Australian driver Daniel Ricciardo, who is McLaren-bound at the end of this season.

Alonso, who won his two world championship titles with Renault in 2005 and 2006, said the French team had given him his "fondest memories" in Formula One.

"Renault is my family," the 38-year-old Spaniard said.

"It's a great source of pride and with an immense emotion I'm returning to the team that gave me my chance at the start of my career and which now gives me the opportunity to return to the highest level."

Alonso left Formula One in 2018 after four fruitless years at McLaren and is due to make a third attempt to win the Indianapolis 500 with McLaren in August.

Alonso said he had bought into Renault's project for the coming season.



Fernando Alonso won the Formula One title with Renault in 2005 and again in 2006

"Their progress this winter gives credibility to the objectives for the 2022 season and I will share all my racing experience with everyone from the engineers to the mechanics and my team-mates," he said.

"The team wants and has the means to get back on the podium, as do I."

Cyril Abiteboul, managing director of Renault Sport Racing said the signing of Alonso was a sign of Renault's "plan to continue its commitment to F1 and to return to the top of the field".

"His presence in our team is a formidable asset on the sporting level but also for the brand to which he is very attached," Abiteboul said.

"The strength of the bond between him, the team and the fans make him a natural choice. In addition to past successes, it is a bold mutual choice as well as a project for the future."

Rain restricts play as cricket returns

● Test cricket returned at the Ageas Bowl - but so did the English weather, which ensured that only 17.4 overs were possible on a frustrating day

● England and West Indies players took a knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement

Reuters | London

After a 117-day absence, international cricket returned in familiar fashion as rain and bad light restricted the first test between England and West Indies to 17.4 overs and the hosts closed a frustrating day on 35-1.

After all the anticipation, day one of the first of three tests turned out to be a damp squib. If any fans had been allowed in they would have been jeering and complaining as the players remained in the pavilion for more than 90 minutes because of bad light, despite Southampton's Ageas Bowl having floodlights.

If that frustration, an issue administrators appear powerless or unwilling to address, was all-too familiar, much else about the occasion felt very different.

The match is being played in a "bio-secure environment" with daily health checks for everyone in the ground. There are home umpires - the first time in Eng-



Players 'takes a knee' in support of the Black Lives Matter movement

land since 2002 - and because of that each team have three referrals instead of the usual two per innings.

Players are not allowed to use saliva to polish the ball and umpires will not take jumpers and caps from bowlers.

After a rain-delayed start, players from both teams "took a knee" having observed a minute's silence to mark the victims of the novel coronavirus and former West Indies batsman Everton Weekes, who died last week.

England won the toss and opted to bat but soon lost Dom Sibley for nought after he left a Shannon Gabriel delivery which cut back to clip his off stump.

It looked a poor decision at any time but all the more so as in the previous over he had seen partner Rory Burns lucky to es-

cape an lbw review after doing exactly the same thing. After further rain delays, England eventually settled to their task. Burns was not out 20 and Joe Denly on 14 when bad light brought them off in the 18th over - never to return.

Kemar Roach was the pick of the West Indies bowlers, giving up two runs from his six overs. England's top order batting

remains something of a work in progress but the strength in depth of their bowling options was illustrated by the decision to leave seamer Stuart Broad out of a home test match for the first time since 2012. Pace duo Jofra Archer and Mark Wood will spearhead their attack.

West Indies bowled steadily, without too many fireworks, but had little to work with on a damp day.

"It's been a bit tough, coming off and on," Gabriel said. "We just have to keep switched on when we come back on. It's been a tough day but we've been doing well so far."

On the ball that claimed the only wicket of the day, he added: "It was a good delivery after coming back from almost a year off in test cricket. It feels good to be back."

Bitter rivals Zverev, Kyrgios withdraw from Berlin tournament amid virus spat

AFP | London

The eagerly-awaited showdown between under-fire Alexander Zverev and Nick Kyrgios, who blasted the German as "selfish" for partying just days after a coronavirus scare, was cancelled on Wednesday after both men withdrew from an exhibition event in Berlin.

Both men were slated to join world number three Dominic Thiem at the mens and womens tournament from July 13-19 in the German capital.

"I was planning this month to play in Berlin, but I have made the decision to stay put and train with my team and not play any tournaments at the moment," Zverev, ranked seventh, wrote on social media.

"It's never nice to miss the



Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios (R) hugs German tennis player Alexander Zverev after winning the 2019 Mexico ATP Open

chance to play at home, but I will be back soon," added Zverev who said ex-pro David Ferrer has joined his coaching team on a trial basis.

Kyrgios, ranked 40th in the world, is also out amid travel

concerns from Australia, where the coronavirus pandemic has worsened with Melbourne back in lockdown.

"When we got Nick Kyrgios involved in May, this development wasn't to be expected,"

said tournament director Edwin Weindorfer.

The Austrian added he is struggling to replace Zverev and Kyrgios, two of the biggest draws to the Berlin tournament.

"Time is extremely short, but we will do everything we can to find possible last-minute options."

News of the Berlin withdrawals comes after Kyrgios launched a controversial verbal assault on Zverev and Thiem.

Zverev, 23, was filmed partying in a busy bar despite pledging to follow self-isolating guidelines after playing in Novak Djokovic's coronavirus-hit Adria Tour in the Balkans.

Although Zverev tested negative, Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov, Viktor Troicki and Borna Coric, who also played, were positive.

Tottenham's Eric Dier given four-game ban over fan confrontation

AFP | Madrid

Tottenham's Eric Dier has received a four-match ban and been fined £40,000 (\$50,000 for climbing into the stands to confront a supporter after his side's FA Cup exit to Norwich.

The England international has been sanctioned by the Football Association on a charge of misconduct for the incident, which happened on March 4.

Dier, whose team had just lost a penalty shootout, saw his brother being abused by a fan and jumped to his aid. There was no physical exchange and the matter was not pursued by the police after a brief investigation.

"Eric Dier has been suspended for four matches with immediate effect, fined £40,000 and warned as to his



Eric Dier

future conduct following a breach of FA Rule E3," it said in a statement.

"The Tottenham Hotspur FC player admitted that his actions at the conclusion of a fixture against Norwich City FC in The FA Cup on 4 March 2020 were improper but denied that they were also threatening.

"An independent regulatory commission subsequently found Eric Dier's actions to be threatening."