

## The Chequered F1ag



A Formula One blog by Stephen English  
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### Little option but to postpone Bahrain

WITH the Middle East being torn apart at its seams with political unrest sport has to take a back seat to reform. As a result there was little choice but to postpone the season opening Grand Prix in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Formula 1 was under tremendous pressure not to travel to Bahrain but ultimately the decision was made by the Bahrain Crown Prince. Since entering the Formula 1 fray in 2004 Bahrain has quickly established a position as a power broker in the sport. There are numerous major investments in Formula 1 directly linked to the Kingdom, not least that a Bahrain investment company has a considerable share holding in McLaren, and as a result it was crucial that the cancellation of the race would allow the locals to save face, and for Formula 1 not to lose financial support from the country.

While the realities of life in the Middle East have come clearly into focus in recent weeks Bernie Ecclestone knows that investment drives his sport. Even though it has been clear that a race could not take place in Bahrain, Ecclestone also knew that if he wanted to maintain support from Bahrain investors he could not be the man to cancel the race.

Race organisers, and internet rumour, have said that Bahrain will find a way back onto the F1 calendar for 2011 but there is little chance of that actually occurring. According to the rumour mill the most likely spot for Bahrain would be as the penultimate race of the season. While, at first glance, it makes sense for the Bahrain to take place one week after the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix there would be no reason for the organisers in Abu Dhabi to agree to such a calendar shift.

They would legitimately feel that by holding a second race in a gulf state that they would lose a lot of potential revenue from ticket sales, tourism and corporate fees. In addition to this it has been clear for years that the oil rich countries of the Middle East are incredibly competitive and as a result why would Abu Dhabi allow another event to overshadow their own?

It will take time, probably two months, but eventually the Bahrain organisers or Ecclestone will quietly release a statement that there is no available dates for Bahrain to be slotted into and as a result the 2011 season will consist of 19 races.

Now is not the time for second guessing, but once the dust has settled in the Middle East Formula 1 will need to take a long hard look at itself and decide whether the decision to move away from its traditional European heartland into countries such as Bahrain will really benefit the sport long term. The attraction of the Middle East, for all sports, was obviously bottom line figures, but the negative publicity of recent weeks has shown that the image of these countries was very different to the reality of life there.

Just like a mirage in the desert fools you to believe there is water, the money in the Middle East has fooled sport that human rights violations could be papered over by a bigger cheque.

### Irish riders expected to challenge in Superbikes

The new WSBK season will begin this weekend with Philip Island playing host to one of the most exciting racing series in the world.

Irish interest will be high in the series this year with Castrol Honda rider Jonathon Rea starting the season as the bookies favourite to take the title. The Antrim native has quietly built a reputation as one of the world's best production based racers but looks set to face stiff competition from Max Biaggi, Carlos Checa and Marco Melandri for the title. Last year Red had four wins in the Superbike class but injuries took their toll. Heavy crashes at Miller Motorsport Park and Imola saw Rea limp over the finish line to fourth in the championship.

Rea will be joined on the starting grid by Eugene Laverty. Last season Laverty finished runner up in the supporting Supersport class but showed a tremendous burst of speed to win eight times in the 600cc class. While the jump to racing a Superbike has been too great for some riders it seems that Laverty has taken to his Yamaha R1 like a duck to water; in testing he has been regularly to the fore.

Laverty has some big shoes to fill as a works Yamaha rider. In 2009 Ben Spies took the title and managed to convert his successes into a coveted Yamaha MotoGP ride. Last year Cal Crutchlow impressed everyone as a Superbike rookie and has now joined Spies as a MotoGP rider. It will be interesting to see how Laverty compares to the performances of his predecessors; if he meets expectations a move to MotoGP could be on the cards.

### The revival of WSBK

In recent years Superbike racing has had a renaissance. Whereas in the past, when GP racing featured two-stroke machinery, it was believed that production based racing offered little value as a training ground for young riders, nowadays the value of the championship can be seen by the quality of its riders.

Biaggi, the reigning champion, was a four time 250GP champion before racing in MotoGP for eight years. He came to Superbikes in 2007 and last year dominated WSBK. Biaggi is one of the biggest names in motorsport and as a result, even at 39, he offers a legitimate comparison for younger riders in the class.

This year Melandri has moved from MotoGP to partner Laverty at Yamaha. The Italian is an exceptionally talented racer, as shown by his 2002 250GP title, but has fallen out of favour in the MotoGP paddock. The Italian, title runner up to Valentino Rossi in 2005, will offer a terrific comparison for Laverty this year. If the Irishman can outperform his experienced team-mate there is little doubt that he will be in demand in the GP paddock.

The field in WSBK is exceptionally talented with the likes of Checa, Noriyuki Haga, Leon Haslam, James Toseland, Sylvain Guintoli, Ruben Xaus and Chris Vermeulen all having raced in MotoGP. Whereas in the past it might have been said that racing in WSBK allowed a big fish to dominate a small pond, there is now little doubt that the depth of talent in the Superbike paddock can rival that of MotoGP.

## TUG OF WAR Mountain View Tug of War team

# Mountain View take Tug of War event by storm

LOCAL team Mountain View after having won all senior and U-23 national titles set off for Scotland for an international competition which had all the top teams in the world taking part including Scotland, England, Holland, Spain, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

So having won all the national the lads had a lot of pressure on them to do themselves and Ireland proud as there was only one other Irish team willing to take up the challenge that lay ahead of them in Scotland.

Due to work and family commitments, Mountain View did not travel with a full strength squad. There were five competitions up for grabs ranging from 560kg – 680kg and after a lot of debating it was decided to enter a team in all weight classes to give all the lads plenty of pulling.

Nobody including the lads themselves could have predicted what was about to happen. Mountain View knew they had to be at their very best to have any chance of coming home with a medal of any colour as all the winners of the previous world championships were there.

First up was the 640kg International Club competition and after beating all clubs in a very hard fought competition Mountain View found themselves come up



The Mountain View Tug of War team.

against the Scotland team, but unfortunately, after beating them in the round robin series it was the Scots who came out on top of a very hard fought three ends.

This was to set the trend for the next three competitions as Mountain View got to all finals but as they were coming up against a different team in all finals the pressure was showing on the lads.

The last competition of the day was the 600kg which was always on of Mountain View's strongest weights but the lads were really starting to feel the strain now so with very sore bodies, Mountain View took to the mats for the last final of the day.

Here they came up against their old rivals

Kilroe from England. The first end went to England in a time four and a half minutes. The next end was a blow out which means no team gets a point.

Now, the lads could smell victory at last and nothing was going to stop them getting the gold they so rightly deserved. Mountain View won the next two ends with sheer power and determination. So it was a great year to finish off a great year for the lads after all the effort they put in for the last six months.

Mountain View's coaches Martin Egan and Pat Mulchrone and trainer/puller Pdraig Rice could not be prouder of the way the men performed over the weekend doing

themselves and Ireland proud. It's now time for a well earned rest.

The Mountain View panel were as follows: Martin Keogh, Tommy Kilbride, Donal Conroy, Sean Dellamer, Brendan Mulchrone, Ciaran O'Reilly, Brian Murray, Michael Owen, McGreehan, Jonathan Fleming, Gerry McEaney, Ollie O'Neill, Pdraig Rice, Ciaran Fitzpatrick, Pat Harkin. Coaches: Pat Mulchrone and Martin Egan.

Also anyone wishing to join the Mountain View team in the future is more than welcome – any age or weight category just contact Pdraig 087-9031545 or any other member of the club.

## Anti bullying class for kids this Saturday

A UNIQUE bully defence course for children is set to take place this Saturday.

The workshop, which is free of charge, will take place in the Martial Arts School of Fitness, Jocelyn Street.

Throughout the fun 60 minute interactive workshop, kids will be educated on handling situations with bullies, which will inspire them to become champions in life.

Chief Instructor Wayne Rutherford, who is running the course, says that during the workshop, "children will learn how to handle bullies from the most common scenarios."

He added: "It is reported that one out of four kids are being bullied.

"But what can happen if you are a bully? People who bully others can get in serious trouble later in life and end up in jail.

"It is important to educate bullies and discourage them on what can happen if they continue to head down this destructive path."

According to Wayne, there are five keys to success in life, which will be core components of the course.

"Building the confidence of the will enhance their ability to handle situations with bullies. These important lessons will set them on the path for success in life.

"Have a positive attitude, become a champion athlete, surround yourself with good friends and how to climb the ladder of success."

On the day, children will learn the best strategies for protecting themselves from physical and verbal attacks.

Each person will also receive a take home booklet that includes all the lessons given in the workshop. It has important statistics on bullying, champion lessons for success and a take home quiz.

"In this workshop, we will create awareness for the most common bullying techniques and teach the children how to protect themselves."

The class is limited to 45 children and places are filling up fast. The workshop will take place on Saturday, February 26, 2011 and is free for all children.

Workshops for children aged six to eight takes place from 2pm to 3pm and for ages nine to 14, from 3pm to 4pm.

To book you call or children on the course, please call Wayne on 086-2522721.

## DARTS Emerald Casino Dundalk and District Darts League

# Top two square off in Division One

### Emerald Casino DDDL Premier

THE final game of the Premier League was contested between Northend A and the Windmill which was a rescheduled fixture from last week.

Although both teams had a solid season it was the Windmill who took the spoils finishing a valiant second behind O Fhearons A. Chris Murray got the consolation for the Northend, which included a 180 – the final score on the night 5-1 to the away team.

### Emerald Casino DDDL Division One

ALL eyes were certainly fixed on the clash between 1st and 2nd in the DDDL 1st Division. In footballing terms it was a United versus Chelsea type clash that certainly lived up to its billing.

First up saw Paul Dillion (2x100, 1x140) challenge John Duffy (2x100, 1x121). However experience proved to be key in this match with Paul taking the game 2-0 and sending Commercial A 1-0. Patsy Durnin (3x100) battled on the oche with

Peadar Kierans (2x100, 2x140) in what was an excellent game of darts. Peadar took the first leg only for Patsy to battle back to level the game 1-1. The final leg was a tense affair but Peadar hit some nice scores to seal a good win and level the match 1-1.

Next up had Brian Fitzpatrick (4x100) and Aidan Conroy (3x100, 1x125) tussle for oche supremacy. In what was another brilliant darting match it was Aiden who edged out Brian 2-1 in legs to send Stags Gold 2-1 up overall.

The task of steadying the ship was left in Alan McMahaons (3x100) hands against Mick Murtagh (3x100, 1x160). Darts were again of a high standard in this match and although Mick went one leg up Alan battled back extremely well to win it 2-1 and level the match 2-2. At this point the game could have gone either way but the father and son duo of Connor and Brian McArdle had other ideas.

Davy Boland (2x100) played Connor McArdle (2x100) in an excellent scoring encounter. Connor kept it solid with 6 60's in a row to win it 2-0 and guarantee Stags would leave with a point at least. The last game of the night saw Sonny Grimes (4x100) and Brian McArdle (4x100) to the oche. Its testament to both lads how well they played in what was a tense last game.

It was the Chairman of the DDDL Brian who hit the final double 18 in the match to win it 2-0 and the game 4-2 overall. So now the Division 1 title is wide open after the Stags great display of darts away to Commercial A. UncleToms entertained Gormleys in another good match. The result of 3-3 was probably the fairest scoreline after both teams threw nice arrows. Shamrock hosted Cuchulainn in what proved to be a one sided affair winning their match 6-0. Excellent darts all round from Shamrock keeps their fine run in the DDDL 1st Division going. The resurgence of form from O Fhearons B also continued with another fine 5-1 win away to Stags Green. Shane McArdle netting a consolation in the last.

### Emerald Casino DDDL Division Two

THE Lumpers entertained Russels in the 2nd Division. Chris Dullaghan the standout performer on the night with countless 140's and a 180 in his game to help Lumpers to a fine 4-2 home win. PJ Harper and Ollie McGuinness had got Russels off to a fine start but it was the Lumpers who battled back well

to take the match.

Next saw the Windmill B side host Commercial B in what was a very good game of darts. A 180 hit by Larry Quinn helped him overcome an in form Maxi 2-0 and get the ball rolling for the Windmill. All the games on the night were hard fought but it was the Windmill who won it 5-1 overall and seal the 2 League points.

Last up saw League leaders Martlets face Harrys in what was an intriguing clash. Its looking evermore that the Martlets will be applying their trade in the 1st Division next year with some excellent darts again from Isaac, John and Hamilton Smith winning their matches with some excellent scoring from all concerned. The final scoreline was 5-1 to the home side.

### Points of note:

This week's fixtures have been left into any bars/clubs for the Open shield taking place on Thursday February 24. This will be an open draw on the night and seven players required. There is five prelim games to take place which will then leave all remaining teams in a last 16 format. This will finish in April of this year. Lastly we will be running a poker event as mentioned last week and details will follow shortly.