

Bezzecchi dominates field to win inaugural MotoGP Bharat

Finishes Nearly 9 Secs Ahead Of Martin; C'ship Leader Bagnaia Crashes Out

Hindol.Basu@timesgroup.com

Greater Noida: Mooney VR46 team's Marco Bezzecchi crossed the chequered flag to win the inaugural MotoGP Bharat with no one on his tail for quite some time... 8.649 seconds to be precise.

Bezzecchi had enough time to wave at the crowd, then lift his arms aloft, and also show a funky stunt with his Ducati bike. Then came Prima Pramac Racing team's Jorge Martin, also on a Ducati.

Following Martin close, and finishing third, was Monster Energy Yamaha team's Fabio Quartararo – 8.855 seconds adrift of Bezzecchi.

In motorcycle racing, it was a massive victory. In a sport where dynamics change in the blink of an eye, 9 seconds mean you can blink your eye multiple times. Bezzecchi completed 21 laps of the 5-km Buddh International Circuit (BIC) track in 36 minutes, 59.1570 seconds.



Race winner Marco Bezzecchi (right) with Jorge Martin (left) and Fabio Quartararo after the MotoGP Bharat on Sunday

The usual 24 laps of MotoGP were reduced to 21 by the organisers, citing the "hot and humid conditions" which was compounding the difficulties for the riders.

Brad Binder of Red Bull KTM Racing was fourth, 12.643 seconds away from Bezzecchi. Repsol Honda's Joan Mir was 13.214 seconds from Bezzecchi's time.

Bezzecchi got 25 points for

his win, while Martin got 20, Quartararo 16, Binder 13, and Mir 11.

"I really liked this place the day I landed," Bezzecchi said after the breathtaking win. "It's a track that I liked the very first time I rode on it. It was good for me. There was some hard braking, but also some fast parts and chicanes. Physically, I felt better with the head. So change of direc-

tion was not a problem like it was in Mizano. Sector three, especially, was fantastic to ride," the Italian said, showering praise on the BIC track.

Bezzecchi's morale was boosted by the motley crowd present, mostly cheering for the 24-year-old from the Grand Stand. As he was led to the presentation dais, Bezzecchi turned back, went to the track and threw a few team

jerseys towards the crowd. He soaked in every moment of adulation. Such fanfare back home or at any other place of the world must be rare for the motorcyclist.

"I like to celebrate with the fans. I would like to give my heart to the fans. In this part of the world, they are very loud, and I really like to hear the crowd. They enjoyed it of course, and next year they will

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have even more fun. My experience has been amazing and I promise to come back," Bezzecchi said.

The highlight of Sunday's race was the fight for second place between Martin and reigning champion and current riders' standings leader Francesco Bagnaia.

The battle lasted for about 13 laps before Bagnaia, leading over Martin in the second spot, crashed out at Turn 4. It was the Italian's third crash of the season.

After Bagnaia's dramatic crash, Quartararo moved to third. Martin and Quartararo then engaged in a nail-biting duel in the final lap. Martin once again rode wide at Turn 4, giving Quartararo the second spot for a moment before snatching the position back two corners later. The two close battles he fought on the track left Martin tired and ex-

hausted. He was so fatigued that he couldn't even come to the post-race press conference.

"I was totally dehydrated. It was very difficult but somehow I managed to hang on. With 8 laps to go, I felt I wouldn't be able to finish the race. I am really happy that I finished it and took the second position," Martin said after the race.

"It was a tough race, to be honest. I gave everything. It was tough with the acceleration on the straights. I was losing so much, but my team told me I had one of the best races and so I can sleep well tonight. The fans were great and I hope to see them again next year," Quartararo said.

Besides Bagnaia, Fabio Di Giannantonio of Gresini Racing, Aleix Espargaro of Aprilia Racing and Augusto Fernandez of Tech 3 GASGAS Racing also suffered crashes and couldn't finish the race.

Piyal Bhattacharjee