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## THE BRITISH GRAND PRIX FROM A TYRE POINT OF VIEW

*Silverstone, July 7<sup>th</sup> 2011* – Silverstone is one of the fastest and most demanding tracks of the year on the tyres, due to its abrasive surface and a lap length that is second only to that of Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium on this year's calendar. The PZero Silver hard tyres and PZero Yellow soft tyres have been nominated for the British Grand Prix, but with cool temperatures, cloudy skies and an uncertain weather forecast, there is a strong chance of the PZero Blue intermediate and PZero Orange wet tyre seeing some action as well this weekend. Silverstone has undergone a number of changes over the years, and the most noticeable addition this season is a brand-new pit and paddock complex after Club corner – which means that all the corner numbers have changed. We take a look at a few of the most demanding ones...

### THE TRACK

The first part of the circuit is very fast, with several rapid direction changes, which puts the emphasis on the front tyres to find the best possible grip.

Turn three is a slow corner, which relies more on mechanical rather than aerodynamic grip. The rear tyres have to find the best possible contact with the track surface, in order to gain maximum traction. The turn-in of the car is particularly important here too, with the soft tyres in particular giving the driver the most precision and feedback at this very tricky part of the circuit.

The best grip at Luffield corner is found close to the apex. Then the drivers gradually move to the outside of the circuit in order to put all the power down for what used to be the short start-finish straight.

Copse is well-known for having a bump right in the middle of the corner, which is absorbed by the shoulders of the tyre in order to keep the car settled and still guarantee the optimal contact patch.

Becketts is an extremely demanding series of corners with an average speed of over 200kph. The aerodynamic downforce and sideways acceleration of 4G causes the tyre to progressively heat up, eventually reaching more than 120 degrees centigrade.

After Vale curve there is a fast left to right direction change, and then the drivers reach Club corner again. They hug the apex closely before getting back on the power and starting another lap...

### DIDCOT

The British Grand Prix is actually Pirelli's second 'home' race, as the Italian company has a logistics and distribution facility at Didcot, 45 minutes from Silverstone by car. Around 40 people are based there, including the 12 engineers assigned to the teams and the 19 tyre fitters whose job it is to put the tyres on the rims. Pirelli's 12 distinctive carbon black trucks live in Didcot as well: two service trucks, seven tyre transporters, and three trucks for the hospitality unit.

As Pirelli's Motorsport Director Paul Hembery points out: "It was important for us to have a base in the United Kingdom, as eight of the 12 Formula One teams are there and this enables us to provide them with the most prompt and efficient service. We also wanted to establish a centre of competence in Britain, in order to benefit from the know-how in this country and attract some of the best engineers and other personnel, who are used to working in England."

Nonetheless it is an international community: there are eight nationalities represented among the people who work at Didcot, speaking a total of 10 different languages.

Pirelli looked at more than 50 potential sites within the UK at the start of the year before settling on Didcot in Oxfordshire, which contained the right combination of indoor and outdoor space, together with convenient transport links by road and air.

Pirelli's 50,000 Formula One tyres are produced at Izmit in Turkey and then transported by road to Didcot one to two weeks before each European race. At Didcot, the bar codes are confirmed and the tyres are allocated to each team, following the random assignation of the codes by the FIA, the sport's governing body.

Following each race, the used tyres are taken back to Didcot as well for recycling at a specialised plant nearby.

Didcot does not just deal with the Formula One, GP2 and GP3 race tyres but also the other non-race tyres that the teams require on a regular basis, such as wind tunnel tyres, show tyres and test rig tyres.

For Pirelli's truck drivers, Silverstone is the shortest journey of the year, consisting of just 70 kilometres. By contrast, the longest journey for the hospitality unit is Istanbul in Turkey, 3100 kilometres away by road.

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