

Ang rewrites his national hurdles record at Thailand Open

Nicholas De Silva

National track and field athlete Ang Chen Xiang shaved 0.19 seconds off his previous mark to lower the national record in the men's 110m hurdles at the Thailand Open yesterday.

The 23-year-old crossed the finish line in 14.19sec, placing a creditable sixth against the continent's top athletes in the final.

"This is of tremendous significance to me, as I took a gap year in my final year of school to pursue my

athletic endeavours, and the decision is beginning to bear fruit," said the National University of Singapore medical student of his new record.

South Korea's 2014 Asian Games silver medallist Kim Byung Jun also clocked a national record of 13.39sec as he won the final.

Thailand's Jamras Rittidet finished in second place with 13.88sec, while Filipino Patrick Ma Unso was third with 13.91sec, also a national record.

Ang had first broken the national record two years ago, when he shat-

tered Abdul Hakeem Halim's seven-year-old mark of 14.45sec by 0.01sec at the 2015 Singapore Open.

He then beat his own mark again at the SEA Games later that year, clocking 14.38sec during the heats.

Although Ang was included in the Singapore National Olympic Council's (SNOC) provisional list of athletes selected for the Kuala Lumpur SEA Games from Aug 19-30, his spot is not guaranteed yet.

To do so, he had to equal Ma Unso's bronze-medal timing of 14.12sec at the last SEA Games.

Despite falling shy of the automatic qualification criteria, his new personal best still puts him up for consideration as it is well within the 97 per cent of the third-place result (faster than 14.30sec) delineated by Singapore Athletics Association (SAA).

The qualifying window closes on Thursday, when the SAA's selection panel convenes to decide on the final list of athletes who will be competing at the Kuala Lumpur Games.

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Ang Chen Xiang finished sixth in the 110m hurdles yesterday, taking 0.19 seconds off his previous mark to clock 14.19sec. But he needed a time of 14.12sec in order to guarantee his berth at the SEA Games. ST FILE PHOTO

HAMILTON: TEAM ARE ON TARGET ONCE MORE

Optimal tyre use less of a problem now, says Briton, adding that other challenges still exist

MONTREAL • The goalposts may have moved in Formula One this season but, after a dominant one-two in Canada on Sunday, three-time world champion Lewis Hamilton feels Mercedes are back on target.

Hamilton cruised home 19.7 seconds ahead of team-mate Valtteri Bottas for their first one-two since the Finn joined in January as replacement for retired champion Nico Rosberg.

The Briton's 56th career victory was his sixth in Canada and third in a row, and he turned the tables on Ferrari with a peerless performance.

Hamilton qualified on pole, the 65th of his career to equal the tally

of his late Brazilian boyhood idol Ayrton Senna, led from start to finish and also set the fastest lap.

Coming two weeks after Monaco, where he had qualified badly and finished seventh as Ferrari enjoyed their first one-two since 2010, it was the perfect weekend.

"I think for us, we really solidified our strength, we've got a better understanding of the car and hope we can put it in the same spot in the following races," he told Sky Sports television.

"Also we know now, after the last race, where to develop this car moving forward, which I think is really going to make a difference in winning this championship."

But he warned that there was still

much to do and it would take time.

"I don't think we've completely got rid of all the issues we have," he said. "We've understood the tyres, utilised the tyres a lot better this weekend, but I think there's still things we've understood but that you can't just fix in two weeks."

"So in terms of where we direct the development, the guys now in the factory have a much better goal. The goalposts have moved, but... now they can work full steam ahead towards that."

Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel, a four-time world champion, finished fourth on Sunday – the first time this season that he has finished outside the top two. His lead over Hamilton was cut to 12 points with 13 races left.

The German and Hamilton now have three wins each this season, with Bottas taking the other.

Vettel had also qualified on the

front row in Montreal but the expected battle between the two title contenders failed to materialise, with the German having to fight through the field after his car's front wing was broken on the opening lap. His team-mate Kimi Raikkonen was seventh.

Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo completed the podium.

"I only had fun when I saw the chequered flag," said the Australian. "I was defending the whole race."

There was no doubt relief for Lance Stroll as well during his home race. The 18-year-old Williams driver was born and raised in Montreal but will probably care more about the fact that he has scored his first points in Formula One than where he registered them.

He finished ninth, which he hopes will give him some breathing room from his critics.

REUTERS, THE TIMES, LONDON



Lewis Hamilton leading the Canadian Grand Prix on Sunday, en route to his sixth victory in 10 years at Montreal. His victory at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve cut Sebastian Vettel's world championship lead from 25 points to 12. PHOTO: REUTERS

InTheDriver'sSeat

Mercedes take cue from Mayweather to land Ferrari body blow



David Tremayne

So just how did Mercedes turn their fortunes around with such startling effectiveness, between a hugely embarrassing Monaco Grand Prix – where Valtteri Bottas could only finish fourth and Lewis Hamilton a lost seventh – and Canada a fortnight later when the Briton headed the Finn home in their first dominant one-two of the season?

Such questions are likely to occur many times this season, as the intense fight between Ferrari and Mercedes – Sebastian Vettel and Hamilton – ebbs and flows.

Both teams do a huge amount of analysis after each race, whether to assess why they succeeded, or why

they failed. It's a key part of the game these days.

So many aspects of performance are minutely monitored as sensors feed back data to engineers hungry for that little bit of extra knowledge that can mean the difference between winning or losing.

Understanding what your equipment is doing is crucial, and one tool that helps with that is simulation. Everything is fed into a programme, then the numbers are crunched to create a simulation of what the car should be doing, and how it can be set up to achieve that.

After they changed aspects of the set-up of both cars between the two practice sessions in Monaco, Mercedes got lost, and the problems they engineered into the way they configured them stayed with them for the rest of the weekend.

It transpired that the simulations were misleading, and in the immediate aftermath, Mercedes launched a forensic post-mortem investigation to discover why.

They (Mercedes) had managed to widen the car's set-up window... that enabled them to beat Ferrari in qualifying and to be ahead even before it was Vettel's turn for bad luck in the (Canadian Grand Prix) race.

"It was a reality check in Monaco," Hamilton admitted on Sunday evening in the afterglow of his sixth victory on Montreal's Ile Notre Dame. "We could see the effects of what we had done wrong, but now we had to understand the reasons for that."

That meant doing a huge amount of further detailed analysis into every aspect of performance, looking at the chassis and the complex power unit to make sure that the imperfect simulations

were corrected. They also needed to understand why the wind tunnel gave them one reading, and the simulator (the device in which the drivers perform virtual simulations of what they expect to encounter on the track) gave them a different one.

Correlation of such data is critical, and when the two devices get out of kilter in their predictions, that's when trouble starts.

When Hamilton went to the Mercedes factory on the Thursday after Monaco, the engineers were still conducting the post-mortem analysis, and he admitted that all he could do was ask further questions and give more feedback, then just focus on this week and the task that lay ahead in Canada.

There they had further discussions about what the post-mortem had found, and in the engineering meeting a week later, discoveries were still being made.

That was when they finally got a clear idea of what had gone wrong. "So it was really down to the

team, great minds working together, communicating," he said. "Which, working in a big organisation like this, doesn't always happen. It's easy to miscommunicate things, but we're very open together in moving forward as a team."

Of course, having done all that cerebral work they weren't about to tell the world what they had discovered. Such gold standard currency is kept a close secret, in case it can be of value to rivals. But it is believed to have centred on correcting minor but hugely influential mistakes that had been made in Mercedes' chassis set-up which prevented them getting Pirelli's super-soft and ultra-soft tyres working in their limited temperature windows.

They had managed to widen the car's set-up window, though Hamilton admitted that he was nearly late for qualifying as he mistakenly believed he had an hour longer before it began, as he was so engrossed on his laptop trying to

fine-tune his set-up further.

"This weekend we were really happy with the work we did, the guys did such a great job in terms of where we began and the small incremental steps that we made," he said. "We really made no fault in the direction of the settings."

That enabled them to beat Ferrari in qualifying and to be ahead even before it was Vettel's turn for bad luck in the race.

He likened it to delivering a (retired American boxer) Floyd Mayweather-style punch: "Ferrari have been doing a fantastic job all year and I just think today Mercedes were the best. It was our first one-two of the year so in terms of optimal points it was the most powerful weekend we've had, and we maximised it."

"If Ferrari do that to us, it's a blow. It's like a right hook. This time it was us punching like Mayweather. I hope this can continue throughout the year."

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