

Formula One

New-style race circuits choose Barco for race control & media room



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*Gernot Froestl, Managing Director,
PKE Gulf WLL*

What would Giuseppe Farino, winner of the first Formula One™ championship in Silverstone (UK) in 1950, think if he stood on the circuits where Vettel is now defending his crown of FIA Formula One World Champion? Formula One™ racing has become really big business, these days. And the most recent race circuits are bafflingly hi-tech.

When Alonso, Massa, Webber, Button and Hamilton are racing in Abu Dhabi, Korea, Delhi or Bahrain, officials are following their moves on super-sized video walls in the race control centers, while journalists enjoy the images on large screens in the media center. One of the starring brands behind the four new-style circuits is Barco.

BARCO

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Formula One™ is the world's most popular sports on TV. In 2010, the races were broadcast live in 187 countries and to 527 million viewers worldwide. On top of that, almost four million live spectators attend Grand Prix events around the world every year, thus making the races a huge boon to local tourism and a great opportunity to brand a country. No wonder the construction of the Bahrain circuit, back in 2004, was a national objective for the kingdom, initiated by the Crown Prince himself.



The Bahrain International Circuit was the very first official FIA Formula One™ circuit to be built in the Middle East. Other recent additions to the FIA calendar are the races in Abu Dhabi (2009), Korea (2010) and Delhi, India (2011). All four races take place on circuits considered to be architectural gems, featuring the most advanced technology.

Exciting motorsport experience

System integrator PKE, who both boast many references in motorsports, equipped the new circuits with state-of-the-art technology. Gernot Froestl, Managing Director, PKE Gulf: "When we heard about a tender for a new circuit in Abu Dhabi, we brainstormed how we could help racing circuits create an exciting – and safe - motorsport experience." They came up with the idea to install video walls at the race control centers and the media center instead of small monitors. "Many media centers feature single monitors hanging from the ceiling. Not really aesthetic. Besides, this set-up restricted the use of the center. An attractive room with a video wall can be rented out for meetings, seminars and any other events, thus generating extra income," Froestl continued.

High quality, continuity and technical support

Barco was the preferred technology for the new concept. Froestl: "Our business partners have been installing Barco solutions for over ten years now and is confident they are the highest-quality solutions on the market. In addition, Barco ensures continuity: it's a reliable, sound business with branches worldwide so we're sure to have spare parts available for many years to come. Last but not least, Barco's local teams are always ready to help."

Only the highest standards

PKE travelled to Abu Dhabi to demonstrate their concept to advisors to the Crown Prince. "They insisted on only the highest standards, which we could offer," Froestl recalled. In 2009, Barco installed three OV-508 video walls (2x2; 5x3 and 2x2) in the spanking new race control center. The media center features three OV-808 (5x2) rear-projection systems. Both solutions ensure outstanding picture quality, reliability and ease of use. The advanced Barco Transform A controller and control room management software, for their part, allow of easy display wall management, content sharing and collaboration. PKE further supplied a wireless touch panel to control the video wall settings – just like the lights, the curtains, etc. Barco took care of its integration.

Four new circuits

Other new race circuits soon followed the example of Abu Dhabi's Yas Marina Circuit. In 2010, PKE furnished the race control center of the Korea International Circuit (OV-508 in a 5x3 set-up) and refurbished that in Bahrain with LCD displays. The company is currently finishing the installation of six rear-projection systems at the brand-new Delhi circuit. "For Bahrain we chose NSL-4601 displays with WXGA resolution. They require less space, maintenance and power consumption while ensuring a great contrast ratio and exceptional brightness," said Froestl.

Monitor in real time

So when World Champion Vettel is racing in Abu Dhabi, Korea, Bahrain or Delhi, race controllers can follow him – and keep watch on the spectators - in real time, on a large video wall that provides images from all the CCTV cameras along the track. The operators can easily configure the screen, zoom in or change a viewpoint. In this way, they can detect problems quickly and take the appropriate action. In Abu Dhabi and India, the press gathers in large media centers, where they are spoiled with the highest quality images, on a large screen. Racing anno 2011 surely is hi-tech, both on and around the tracks.

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