

THE VR-01 - A VIRTUAL REALITY

Virgin Racing unveils its first all-digital F1 race car

A CAR IS BORN

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The new Virgin Racing Formula One team, one of the sport's four new entrants for the 2010 FIA Formula One World Championship, has proudly unveiled its debut race car - the VR-01.

The VR-01 is the first of a new breed of race car designed entirely in the digital domain using CFD (Computational Fluid Dynamics). It is the brainchild of Virgin Racing's Technical Director, Nick Wirth, who has gained an international reputation for pioneering a purely CFD approach to car development, wholly designing, building and testing race cars in computer simulation without the need for expensive, resource-heavy scale-model wind tunnel testing.

A new team for a new era of Formula One, the Virgin Racing team concept looks to exploit and capitalise upon F1's new economic dawn. The team was launched at an event in London last December, but with the focus now firmly on developing the ground-breaking VR-01 for the start of the 2010 season, it was fitting that the roll-out of the new car should also be 'all-digital'. All eyes were on the car's distinctive red and black livery as the VR-01 commenced its tour of duty at a photographic studio, ahead of an official launch presentation on VirginRacing.com. PR commitments completed, the VR-01 was taken directly to Silverstone where it will be prepared for a two-day shakedown prior to its first scheduled test in Jerez next week.

A busy schedule lies ahead, much like the one that has taken the VR-01 from dream to reality in the space of just 10 months. Nick Wirth's design team at Wirth Research in Bicester, UK, started putting the basic layout of the VR-01 together in the early part of 2009 in order to hit the ground running should the team's 2010 entry be successful. 12 days after the team was accepted into the Championship, the design of the monocoque surfaces was locked down and a race against time was underway. The established F1 teams had a significant head start, not least because they had the obvious advantage of evolution, whereas Wirth Research designed the VR-01, quite literally, from a blank computer screen.


Most F1 teams use CFD in the design process but in tandem with scale model testing in one or more wind tunnels. The VR-01 is the product of six months of pure CFD development involving thousands of design solutions generated by the technical team and the state-of-the-art technology at their Bicester base. In theory, the team's pre-season testing programme began several months ago - in the virtual sense - courtesy of what is widely regarded as amongst the most progressive real-time Simulator technology in motor sport. When race drivers Timo Glock and Lucas di Grassi begin testing in anger next week, the VR-01 should feel very similar to the car they 'drove' on the Wirth Research simulator.

With the VR-01 now a reality, Virgin Racing Technical Director, Nick Wirth, outlined the team's objectives for its debut F1 season and the longer term:

"Today is a very proud day for everyone involved with Virgin Racing, however on this occasion, where the car is the star, I want to pay tribute to all the amazing people at Wirth Research who deserve so much of the credit for the VR-01. Putting together an F1 team, assembling an engineering group and designing a new car from scratch is an epic task in the timeframe we have been working to.

"I have always had the utmost confidence in Nick to design a good race car, just as he has the faith in the race team to make a good job of operating it. Having worked closely with the technical team over the past 10 months, I know that the VR-01 is the product of a very intensive and thorough design and development process and my excitement at seeing our first race car make its track debut later this week is shared by every single person involved with Virgin Racing.

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“The first stage in our on-track evaluation programme is our two-day shakedown at Silverstone on Thursday and Friday this week, where we will conduct systematic testing and confidence-building of all car parts and on-car systems. It was always intended that we would miss the first all-team test in Valencia this week and very early on we targeted the second Jerez test in two weeks’ time for our public testing debut. It is a testament to our methodical approach and the sheer hard work of the team that we are heading to Spain a week earlier than planned to take part in the first Jerez test next week.

“I would like to congratulate our new race team - a great bunch of guys working together for the very first time in the pressure-cooker environment of a demanding car build schedule. Logistically it hasn’t been easy, since the initial build of the two race cars is taking place in Bicester, rather than our operational base in Dinnington. Their commitment and professionalism has been exemplary and they have set their own very high bar in terms of trackside performance this season.

“Finally, not only do we have a great bunch of people at Virgin Racing, we also have a great-looking car. We are delighted with our fantastic new livery which provides a fitting integration of our racing brand with our important commercial partnerships. All in all, we have a lot to look forward to as we progress towards our racing debut in Bahrain next month.”

Summing up the mood within Virgin Racing at today’s launch of the VR-01, CEO Graeme Lowdon, said: “The full testing debut of the VR-01 in Spain next week will provide the first real barometer of what we have achieved over the past 10 months, however, for me, simply getting to this point is an incredible achievement in itself. None of this would have been possible were it not for the incredible determination of the true racers that we have in Nick and John, the support and commitment of Virgin, our investors LDC, our team partners, and the spirited group of team members who have worked tirelessly to bring the technical, racing, commercial and marketing elements together into a formidable F1 race team we can all be very proud of. We have all the components with which to achieve the ambitious targets we have set for ourselves during the next few years.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

Virgin Racing will conduct a shakedown of the VR-01 at Silverstone on 4 and 5 February in front of an audience of invited guests.

The team will then take part in the following open F1 tests in preparation for the start of the 2010 season:

10-13 February	Jerez, Spain
17-20 February	Jerez, Spain
25-28 February	Barcelona, Spain

Media accreditation is conducted by the FIA. Only broadcast rights holders may film within the circuits. Virgin Racing is unable to accredit media for these tests.

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