

Q&A: Mufaddal Choonia on Mahindra Racing's 100th Grand Prix

San Marino, 08 September 2016: 2016 has been a wonderful year for Mahindra Racing. Not only has the Mahindra MGP3O been able to take two wins, but the MGP3O is now a constant podium challenger. The journey to this point started back in 2011, 99 Grands Prix ago. On the eve of this historic 100th Grand Prix start, Mahindra Racing CEO Mufaddal Choonia sat down to reflect on the historic 2016 season and journey so far.

It seems as though Mahindra Racing's 100th Grand Prix couldn't have come at a better time?

"The results in 2016 have been simply amazing. We knew the potential to challenge for the podium has always been there and to see Pecco fight for the top three on a regular basis has been very rewarding. Of course, the win in Assen was a highlight, a truly unforgettable moment because it was the first. But to see McPhee and Martin on the podium in Brno proved the MGP3O is a competitive machine for many riders.

"Pecco's pole in Silverstone was a great feather in both our caps. It has been a little while since we had a pole position and that was one of the final achievements we were missing from 2016. Moto3 is the most competitive class in the motorcycle racing world, the three manufacturers are close and there are so many young and hungry talents. Even after 100 Grands Prix it's a pleasure to watch and be a part of."

You came close to having another Mahindra Racing double podium with Manzi in Silverstone...

"What a ride from Stefano! All of us were in shock and awe after the race, we had hoped he could get some points from 34th on the grid but Moto3 is so competitive that you can never be sure. The ride he produced was simply outstanding. It was great to not only see Stefano ride like that but also that he could do it aboard the MGP3O and prove the potential of the bike without a doubt. I think he got even more coverage on social media than Pecco did on Sunday!

"The last few months show that we are heading in the right direction with our 2017 program. We have a test scheduled in Valencia after Misano where we will have more time to experiment and allow more riders to try the updates that we intend to bring in 2017."

Speaking of development, what role has the development centre in Besozzo played?

"Opening our own state-of-the-art development centre has been the game changer. As everyone is aware, we had an initial agreement with Suter Racing Technology which has now ended, and quite frankly that did help us in the initial years. But we realised last year that if we have to be successful in racing, we have to work at our own pace with our own team and focus on exactly the areas we need to. We have assembled a great team which is led by Davide Borghesi and Michele Ciappina. The results of their work are clear to see with the on-track results.

"2016 saw a truly 'Mahindra' MGP3O emerge and our results have blossomed. We are in the podium mix almost every weekend and more and more riders are beginning to battle for better and better positions. This in particular is hugely encouraging; it proves our bike works well. Our focus has been on making the bike easy to work on and easy to ride, needing less setup time to reach a high level. I would also like to acknowledge the terrific contribution that all our technical partners & suppliers have made on various aspects of the bike, without their support these results would be impossible to achieve"

It hasn't always been easy but Mahindra Racing has certainly established itself in the lightweight class...

"Definitely. 2012 was a bad year, there's no doubting that. We could have very easily given up after that but we persisted and chipped away at it and it's all paying off now. Many people said we could not do it over the years, but still we remained determined. I think this echoes the corporate attitude of Mahindra, when we put our minds to something we stay with it and achieve our goals. It's a great honour not just for us at Mahindra Racing but for everyone at Mahindra. I frequently get calls and messages from Mr. Anand Mahindra about the racing, he's a true fan and he takes immense pride in the results of the team. No one else in India is doing what we are."

100 races soon to be completed, what are the goals for the next 100 races?

"We're still taking it one season at a time, but the ultimate goal is to fight for the world championship. To do this you need the perfect storm of rider, bike, team and many other factors. 2016 has been wonderful, we are so pleased with how it has all gone and right now we are focusing on giving Pecco and the other riders everything they need to keep the incredible results coming. I just want to say thank you again to all the teams at the track, in Besozzo, in India and to all the riders who have been there along the way as we approach our 100th Grand Prix in Misano."

Relive all the special moments, hard battles and rewarding podiums with our celebration video: <https://youtu.be/lc8scHS6tbo>

Help commemorate this incredible day by sharing your Mahindra Racing memories with the hashtag #100atMisano