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Above, as so often has happened at Scuderia Ferrari since the beginning of time, a new driver to the team wins the first time out – Raikkonen in Australia. Right, Raikkonen at the wheel of his F2007 in the garage in Australia.

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Above and right, Felipe Massa was not to be left behind. After trying times in the first two races, he came storming back to take the pole and the flag at the third race in Bahrain. At this point, both drivers are co-equals.



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THE SEASON OPENS WITH A BANG, WITH OUR BOYS WINNING TWO OUT OF THE FIRST THREE RACES... REPORTS FROM KEITH BLUEMEL

F1 – AUSTRALIA – MARCH 18...

A new season, with pre-season testing times indicating that Ferrari probably had a stronger package than in 2006, or was it just that they had greater experience with the now mandatory Bridgestone tires! The practice and qualifying sessions in Melbourne were of mixed fortunes for the Ferrari team, with Felipe Massa suffering gearbox problems in practice, then again

in the second qualifying session, thus starting from sixteenth position on the grid. However, the opposite was the case for new team member Kimi Raikkonen, as he outperformed a very strong McLaren-Mercedes challenge to take pole position for the race ahead of Fernando Alonso, now McLaren mounted for 2007, Nick Heidfeld in the BMW Sauber, and McLaren rookie Lewis Hamilton, who put in a polished performance in his first F1 qualifying session to take the fourth slot on the grid.

When the lights went out, Raikkonen made a copybook start from pole position to head

the field into the first turn, with both Heidfeld and Hamilton getting the jump on current World Champion Alonso, to run second and third. Raikkonen gradually eased away from his pursuers to build up a comfortable cushion of around 14 seconds before the first round of stops, of whom Heidfeld was the first on lap fourteen, some five laps sooner than any of the other front runners, indicating that he had been running a lighter fuel load. When the first round of stops panned out, Raikkonen's Ferrari still led by around 11 seconds, and both Hamilton's and Alonso's McLarens had leap-

frogged the BMW Sauber of Heidfeld, as had his teammate Kubica. Meanwhile, the second Ferrari of Massa had fought its way through the field running a one stop strategy, which would result in sixth position by the end of the race.

During the second phase of the race, Raikkonen once again stretched his lead, so that it was still a comfortable 14 seconds when he and his main competitors had completed their second round of stops. During this period, Alonso emerged ahead of his teammate Hamilton, but was unable to make any real impression on Raikkonen, who eased