



Media Release

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Fernando Alonso's Australian Connection

Fernando Alonso kicked off his 2004 Formula 1 season with a distinctly Australian flavour today when he was presented with a personalised Western Bulldogs AFL jumper by LeasePlan Australia.

The 22 year-old Spaniard who drives with the Renault F1 Team accepted his novel gift from LeasePlan's Senior Vice President Asia Pacific, Dennis Flentje.

LeasePlan, the world's leading vehicle leasing and fleet management company, has been a personal supporter of Alonso since 1997 when he was scything his way through Spanish open wheeler ranks.

In 2001, when he made his debut behind the wheel of a Minardi – another sporting team to enjoy LeasePlan support – Alonso retained LeasePlan as a personal sponsor and this arrangement continues today with the current deal to run to the end of 2005.

In Australia, LeasePlan is also the major sponsor of the Western Bulldogs AFL club. The staff at their St Kilda Road headquarters were delighted to welcome Alonso on his visit and impart a bit of local knowledge about their native football code.

Alonso starts the 2004 F1 season with an air of expectation and excitement after a stunning 2003 that saw him become the youngest ever winner of a GP with victory in Hungary triumph, as well as collect three other podium finishes, two pole positions and sixth overall in the Drivers' Championship.

His first formal driving engagement for the year will be in his Renault RS24 at Melbourne's Albert Park circuit on Friday when the season opening practice sessions take place at the Foster's Australian Grand Prix.

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