



F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Twelve

Hello and welcome to our F1 Advent Calendar 2009, brought to you by Sidepodcast. We're in the middle of an extended mini series, where each day we open the door on another story of the 2009 season, picking out the key moments that shaped the year. Today we're moving right along to Day Twelve - In the Dark.

Although qualifying for the Hungarian Grand Prix was overshadowed by concern for Felipe Massa after his accident during the second session, there was more to come from the action on Saturday.

Previously to that, McLaren had been on top form during Friday practice - Kovalainen fastest in the first session and Hamilton in the second. Lewis was also strong in Saturday practice, so was feeling very confident for qualifying.

Rosberg was fastest in Q1, whilst both BMWs, Force Indias and Alguersuari were all knocked out of the running. In Q2, the yellow flags caused by Massa's accident did cause a few problems for other drivers, and it was Barrichello, and the Toyota drivers who fell by the wayside. Massa was quick enough to get through to Q3, but by that time he was en route to hospital, so only nine drivers hit the track for the final session.

There was a delay before Q3 got underway, as the marshals had to rebuild the tyre wall, but finally the last ten minutes were ticking on, and the timer hit zero. Thing is, no one knew who had crossed the line fast enough to take pole position because the live timing had died. For us at home, for the commentators in their box, for the teams in the garage and on the pitwall and for Race Control who were trying to keep order.

It was between Alonso in the Renault, two Red Bulls, and Hamilton in the McLaren. Alonso climbed from his car and approached the nearest driver, asking: "What was your time?" They get a read out on the dash of their car, but could it be trusted? They hovered around the parc ferme area, waiting to find out who was on pole, and asking each other if they could remember their times. It was absolutely chaotic, complete nonsense, but also slightly brilliant.

After a good few minutes, they finally confirmed that Alonso had taken pole, with Vettel and Webber behind him, so the three of them posed together in front of the bemused crowd. Fabrice Lom - the Renault engineer for Red Bull - summed up the confusion: "A very strange qualifying session today with Massa's accident and the collapse of the timing, but in the end, it was a one, two, three for Renault, so we can only be happy."

After investigations later, FOM were keen to explain what had happened: "In the closing minutes of the third part of the Formula 1 qualifying session yesterday the finish line sensor suffered a mechanical failure in the form of a damaged cable. Standard procedures were followed and the back-up sensor used. Once the verification procedures were complete, the full results were published. At no time was any timing data lost." They seem keen not to blame LG - the official timekeeper.

That brings this particular story to an end, I hope you can join me again tomorrow when we peer through another door on the F1 Advent Calendar 2009.