



## F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Nineteen

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This is our F1 Advent Calendar 2009 - a mini series brought to you by Sidepodcast. We are reliving the 2009 season with a peek behind each door of advent, finding the story of a key moment of the year. Now we're on to Day Nineteen - It's About Time.

After all the kerfuffle, surrounding Massa's recovery, Renault's potential ban, Schumacher's non-existent comeback, and the just-emerging Singapore drama, it was almost a relief when the European Grand Prix weekend arrived. Finally, some racing! Well, some cars on track at least.

The warmer climate in Spain meant that the Brawn cars were recapturing some of their competitive form, and Barrichello duly topped the timesheets for Free Practice 1. Alonso was top for FP2, and Sutil took the headlines on Saturday morning, showing much increased pace for Force India, although it didn't translate to qualifying quite so well. Fisichella, at this point still driving for Force India, qualified 16th and was knocked out alongside Badoer - who's seat he was about to take. Confusing, I know. Sutil qualified 12th, missing out on the top ten.

As ever, qualifying was all about the battle for pole, and the Brawn's faltered slightly. Barrichello qualified third, with both McLaren's in front of him - Hamilton and Kovalainen locking out the front row with Lewis ahead. Vettel was fourth, Button in fifth.

When it came to race day, it was clear Hamilton would have a great start, the team's early season KERS niggles all figured out. Meanwhile, Button had a terrible time and dropped four places off the line. Further back, there was trouble with the new boys. Luca Badoer initially made up some places on the grid, but then Grosjean, also new to the cockpit, ran into the back of him and spun the Ferrari round. Glock and Buemi also collided, so Timo had to pit for a new nose, and Grosjean had to pit with his own problems.

Webber found himself behind Button, but told his crew over the radio that the Brit had cut the chicane and halted an overtaking move from himself. It's not clear whether this was the case or not, but as a preventative measure, Button fell back and allowed the Red Bull driver through.

Hamilton was enjoying a comfortable lead, whilst Vettel's first pit stop saw the team struggle with a fuel pump problem that meant he had to come in again. Hamilton came in to the pits four laps earlier than Barrichello, which allowed the Brazilian to put his foot down at the front and make the most of his opportunity. He managed to jump Kovalainen as he exited the pits, and had made up plenty of ground on the second McLaren as well.

Before his next stop, Hamilton seemed to be pulling away a little, but in the pits, it all went wrong. The McLaren crew didn't have tyres ready - they were still snugly wrapped up in their heated blankets - and he lost many seconds waiting for them to be fitted. Inevitably, Barrichello's final stop saw the Brazilian exit the pits in the lead, and although Hamilton chased him down valiantly, there weren't enough laps remaining to regain first place. Rubens Barrichello took the chequered flag for the first time in five years. His previous victory was with Ferrari at the Chinese Grand Prix 2004, where he led from pole and for the majority of the race. With this new win, Rubens could put to rest any of the demons that had followed him from that team. He was understandably ecstatic and afterwards said: "It has been a weekend that I will never forget especially because after five years you don't forget how to do it, but it is tough."



The win, coupled with Button's seventh place saw Barrichello close a bit of the gap in the drivers championship, whilst Red Bull's failure to secure any points during the weekend meant Brawn tightened their grip on the constructors title.

That's all for this episode of the F1 Advent Calendar 2009. Tomorrow we will reach our 20th day and that means we are drawing towards the end of the series. I hope you'll join me.

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