

## F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Two

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Welcome to the second edition of this extended mini-series - the F1 Advent Calendar 2009. We're counting down to Christmas with our own bite-size recap of the 2009 season, and we began yesterday with a look at how the Brawn dominated proceedings from the very start of the year. Now we must move on to Day Two - A Key Admission.

The first race of the year was the Australian Grand Prix and at the end of March, all the teams and drivers turned up to welcome the new season in, in style, at Melbourne. The style was perhaps not what the FIA would have liked, as there was already a contentious issue regarding the double diffusers on the backburner. Although the first Grand Prix of the year would continue unharmed, the results were under a black cloud until after the Malaysian race.

Nevertheless, it was action all the way, and at a later than normal starting time, Button and Barrichello lined up on the first row of the grid. Vettel and Kubica were on row two. The race began and Button retained his lead easily and Barrichello kept in touch to celebrate an epic and well-deserved Brawn 1-2 maiden victory. It was a glorious moment for them, but it was just a few laps earlier that a key moment took place.

Vettel and Kubica were fighting for position, Vettel made a mistake and screwed up his braking. Kubica made a move round the outside, but Vettel was pointing away from the corner and ran into the side of the BMW. This spun Kubica who righted himself, almost pushing Vettel into the wall as he did so. The Red Bull had no front wing, and Kubica was also sporting some damage.

The BMW ended up in the wall just a couple of corners later, whilst Vettel continued on for a lap but had to admit defeat and came to a halt. The pair of them were out of the race, and the Grand Prix ended under Safety Car conditions.

Afterwards, both Vettel and Kubica were invited to see the stewards and explain the incident. Perhaps a combination of youth and inexperience led Vettel to hold his hands up and admit fault. He was fined, his team were also fined, but more crucially Vettel received a ten place grid penalty for the next race in Malaysia.

Although this was only the first race of the season, and there was an enormous amount of ups and downs still to come, this was a key moment for Vettel. The initial accident robbed himself of vital points, and his eagerness to accept responsibility ruined his chances of a good result in Malaysia as well.

You can go mad with what if situations in Formula 1, and Vettel managed to spin out of the Malaysia Grand Prix of his own accord, but the grid drop only made his life harder. That, coupled with the points lost in the opening round, could have made the difference in his position at the end of the year. The Red Bull was clearly feisty from the start but this early season glitch meant Vettel took too long to get going.

That's all for our second day of Advent. So far we've had both highs and lows at the very start of the year. I wonder what tomorrow's window will reveal.