



F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Twenty

Hello and welcome to another episode of the F1 Advent Calendar 2009. This extended mini series takes a look at the 2009 season, in bite size stories, revealed each day behind the doors of advent. Today we are on to Day Twenty - Rise and fall.

You'll never believe it, but the Belgian Grand Prix weekend started out a bit wet. There was some rain during the first Free Practice session, and it was Trulli in the Toyota who managed to post the fastest time. Things dried up ahead of FP2, which allowed a bit of normality to resume and Hamilton secured the top spot. The sensible times didn't last for much longer, as Friday turned into Saturday, and it was BMW fastest in the morning practice session. Heidfeld led the way, with Toyota up there again in second.

Throughout the sessions, Force India had shown good pace, and they weren't to be discounted when it came to qualifying. Fisichella was fastest in Q1, with regular names dropping out - Grosjean, Buemi, Alguersuari. In the second session, Toyota was fastest, and we really began to raise our eyebrows. What were all these unusually fast cars doing at the top of the times? Button, Alonso and both McLarens were all knocked out in the second session, meaning it was going to be a very interesting top ten shoot out.

The Red Bull boys could only manage 8th and 9th position, with Vettel ahead, whilst Räikkönen qualified 6th. Barrichello was 4th but it was Fisichella, Trulli and Heidfeld who took the top three positions, and turned up at the qualifying press conference moments later. This was Force India's first ever pole position, and Fisichella's first since 2006, when he was driving for Renault.

Come Sunday, and it was still dry as the race began. Barrichello made a terrible start, practically stalling on the grid, and falling way down the order. It was not to be a good day for the Brawn drivers, as on the first lap, Button was involved in a collision with Grosjean. The Renault ran into the back of Button, spinning them both off track and out of the race. Hamilton saw this happening and lifted off, which caused Alguersuari to run into the back of the McLaren. Both of them were out of the race as well. There were a few choice words said afterwards regarding rookie races and the lack of testing available this season.

The safety car came out, and Räikkönen found himself up in second position, with Fisichella still ahead. Once the Safety Car pulled off, it was so easy for Kimi in the KERS assisted Ferrari to get past the Force India, and he was off into the lead.

At his first pit stop, Mark Webber was released rather aggressively by his Red Bull team, and unfortunately, he was headed straight for Nick Heidfeld. Webber was granted a drive through penalty, and this time, couldn't turn it around to take a win, the penalty pushed him far down the order.

Trulli and Alonso both retired from the race, whilst Vettel suddenly found some speed and began chasing Räikkönen and Fisichella up front. There weren't enough laps remaining to do anything about it, but managed to finish on the podium, with Räikkönen taking his first win since Spain 2008, and Ferrari's first of the year. Fisichella was second, scoring Force India's first ever points - quite a way to make your mark on the championship table.

There were six retirees altogether, and of course, Luca Badoer finished last. Were Ferrari's eyes opened by Fisichella's performance during this weekend? It was just three days later that he was signed up to take Badoer's place.



That's all for this episode of our F1 Advent Calendar 2009. I hope you're enjoying the shows, as we head into the final stretch. Tomorrow we'll be looking at Day Twenty-One.

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