



F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Twenty-Three

This is the F1 Advent Calendar 2009, welcome. We are running through the 2009 season in short bite size chunks, peeking behind each door of advent for a new story of the year. We're moving on to Day Twenty-Three - While you wait.

When the teams and drivers turned up to the Brazil paddock, ready to get on with another weekend of racing, the pressure was high. Vettel's win in Japan had saved his championship challenge, but he would have a real fight back on his hands if he were to make it stick.

Qualifying was going to be crucial, so the fact that it was raining on Saturday afternoon put a bit of a spanner in the works. All the cars were out early in the first session to try and get a banker lap done and dusted. However, just a few minutes in Fisichella spun and stalled, meaning a red flag came out. The Ferrari was recovered, and the teams were ready to get going again. Just seven drivers had a time on the board, but it was raining hard now. The FIA said conditions weren't suitable for running, and there was a sizeable delay until things improved.

When the session did get going, Rosberg was the fastest driver out there, whilst both Vettel and Hamilton were knocked out. Vettel was not at all happy, storming out of the car and even throwing his steering wheel out of the cockpit. He had plenty of time to rant and rave though, as the second session was delayed, again due to the weather.

After a couple of minutes of action, Liuzzi was into the barriers. Another red flag. His was a pretty serious accident, but the Force India driver escaped unharmed. By this time, the rain was really coming down, and although the red flag was thrown initially to clear the track debris, it turned into another weather watch. Everyone had to sit and wait for the conditions to improve, and every ten minutes or so, the medical car did a tour of the track to assess the situation.

Some of the drivers remained in their cars, whilst others climbed out and sat about the garage, talking to their engineers and messing about to pass the time. There was a lot of time to pass, though. If we thought the Q1 delay was big, that was nothing compared to this. We had to wait a whopping 75 minutes for the session to get going again. Waiting, watching, crossing our fingers that the something would happen. The sky was getting darker and darker, and the completion of qualifying wasn't a sure thing.

Eventually the action got underway, with 12 minutes of the second session still to run. Rosberg was fastest once again, whilst Button dropped out early - another big name out before the top ten shootout. This seemed to be a disaster for his championship challenge and afterwards he admitted he was very disappointed. Ross Brawn even said that they would be happy with a last race championship decider, if it came to that, but only if it was both his drivers in the fight for the title. Barrichello did the best he could to make that come true, as when the third and final part of qualifying got underway - without delay this time - he and Webber were trading places at the top. It was the Brazilian driver who finally took pole position at his home circuit. Webber was behind in second and Sutil third in the Force India.

Altogether, qualifying had taken 2 hours and 41 minutes - making it the longest qualifying session ever. The BBC coverage overran by half an hour and they were forced to switch it to a sister channel. During the delay, Red Bull boss Christian Horner said they were all happy to wait it out as they weren't on a deadline. You can bet Bernie was thinking differently though.



That's all for this episode of our F1 Advent Calendar 2009. Tomorrow is our penultimate show, and we're drawing towards the end of the season, so join me then for Day Twenty-Four.

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