



## F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Three

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Here we are with our third edition of the extended mini-series - our F1 Advent Calendar 2009. So far, we have opened the window on day one, and found a tale of Brawn's speed looking back at us. Day two saw a momentary lapse of concentration that affected Vettel's championship right from the start. Let's find out what's behind the door for Day Three - Truth in Kind.

Yesterday, we looked at a controversial incident from the Australian Grand Prix that saw Sebastian Vettel fined and penalised at the next race. Sadly, that was not the only ruling the stewards had to make that race.

Defending champion Lewis Hamilton had a terrible start to the year. His McLaren was slow and the entire team knew they had a lot of work to do. He qualified 15th with a five place grid drop for a gearbox change meaning his race was going to be tough. He made up some positions after the traditional first corner incident and was 13th by the end of the first lap.

He drove hard, and thanks to his scrappy nature and some retirements ahead of him, by the time the safety car came out for the aforementioned Vettel incident, Hamilton was into the points. The two Brawn cars were up front, with Trulli third for Toyota, and Hamilton following him in fourth. It should have been a Safety Car procession to the end, but it was a lot more than that.

Trulli ran off track. Hamilton passed him, and Trulli regained the place. All under safety car conditions. At the time, this is all we knew. Trulli stood on the podium, but the stewards were reviewing the situation the entire time. Hamilton was called to put across his side of the story, and despite telling the media only moments beforehand that his team had told him to allow Trulli to take the place back, he told the stewards that no such instruction had been forthcoming.

The Australian stewards penalised Trulli 25 seconds, for overtaking under the safety car, and knocked him down to 12th position, well out of the points. Trulli was furious about this. He was adamant that Hamilton's version of events was not correct. He said: "When the safety car came out towards the end of the race, Lewis Hamilton passed me but soon after he suddenly slowed down and pulled over to the side of the road. I thought he had a problem so I overtook him as there was nothing else I could do."

Toyota felt an injustice had been done and appealed the penalty, but it turns out that time penalties are not appealable. The matter would not die down though, and when teams arrived at the paddock in Malaysia, the stewards there were looking into the incident all over again. New evidence had been presented, radio evidence of McLaren telling Hamilton to let Trulli past. In the end, Hamilton had to admit that he had lied to the stewards. The team had given him the instruction to pass the Toyota, just as they had given him the instruction to mislead the stewards. He held a press conference holding his hands up, apologising profusely.

The team had to face a little bit more than a public apology. They suspended Sporting Director Dave Ryan - claiming that he had come up with the plan by himself. He was fired not long after. The team were brought up in front of the World Motor Sport Council who handed out a suspended three race ban.

Trulli was reinstated to third place.

That's all for this third episode of our F1 Advent Calendar. Tomorrow we'll be peeking through the window to day four to find another step along our 2009 review. Join me then.