

F1 Advent Calendar 2009 – Day Six

Hello and welcome to our extended mini-series, the F1 Advent Calendar 2009. We're peeping behind the door for each day of advent and finding the story of the 2009 season, told in bite-size chunks. Let's get on, then, with Day Six - Running on Empty.

By the time the Spanish Grand Prix rolled around, Jenson Button and Brawn had allowed Vettel to win the Chinese race with Red Bull, but were back on form in Bahrain to take their third victory of the season. There were plenty of new updates on their competitor's cars, though, so the battle was back on.

Not really though, as in Spain, Button qualified on pole position, with Vettel lining up in second beside him, followed by Barrichello and Massa on row 2. Unusually, Barrichello made a good start in the race, and jumped into the lead at the very first corner. Vettel slipped backwards, allowing both Button and Massa in front of him.

There was carnage on the first lap, initiated by Rosberg. He ran wide which pushed Trulli off track who then spun back on, knocking out Sutil. Buemi braked to avoid the out of control Toyota and Bourdais ran into the back of him, ending Toro Rosso's race very early. A Safety Car was called out for about four laps, and then the race could get underway proper.

At the front, the two Brawns were battling for the lead, but it was to Ferrari that our attention was turned. Raikkonen suffered a hydraulic failure that saw him retire about halfway through the Grand Prix. Massa was running fourth, but received word from the pit wall that there was a problem with the car. They hadn't put enough fuel in at the last pit stop, and he was instructed to try and conserve fuel otherwise he wouldn't finish the race. At the time, they weren't sure if they had made their calculations wrong, or if the refuelling rig had failed to dispense the correct amount.

Either way, the lack of fuel inevitably meant slowing down, and gradually, the Ferrari slipped backwards. He was on the radio to his team, frustrated with losing places to conserve fuel, but they were adamant that it was either that, or run out before the race came to a close. They also had to consider the problem of the FIA requirement to have enough fuel left post-race for a sample to be taken.

Massa had to concede, he lifted off the throttle, and Vettel overtook him. This left him in fifth, and it was Alonso's turn to catch him. It was touch and go but on the last lap, the Renault did manage to get past, so Felipe was sixth as he crossed the line. The only bright point must have been that Heidfeld was also very close behind him but just ran out of time to overtake before the race drew to a close.

Afterwards, Massa conceded that his chance at fighting for the championship again was over - as Button's fourth victory of the year saw him with 41 points out of a possible 45, and Massa, well, he had three points.

Naturally, he was very disappointed, so imagine how he felt when it emerged that he may have had enough fuel all along. By the time Ferrari turned up at Monaco, the team had investigated the problem, and Massa said: "The refuelling machine was putting the right fuel in, it was reading the right numbers of the amount of fuel that went inside but the car was saying to the engineers, to the telemetry, that all the fuel was not inside. Then we changed the refuelling machine, we did exactly the same thing, and we again had the wrong numbers. So maybe I saved fuel for nothing."



That's all for today, thank you for listening, and I hope you'll join me again tomorrow when we'll open the next door on our 2009 season advent calendar.

sidepodcast.com
YOUR WEEKLY F1 FIX