



F1 Digest: Australia Preview

Intro

Welcome to the first ever F1 Digest. This is a new series bringing you coverage of the race weekend, throughout the race weekend. Thursdays, you can expect a preview of the upcoming event, Fridays will look at Free Practice, and Saturday and Sunday will evaluate qualifying and the race respectively. Today, we're welcoming in the new season with our Australia Preview.

Vital Statistics

Date: 16th March

Circuit: Albert Park

Length: 5.3km

Laps: 58

2007 Winner: Kimi Raikkonen

Last Year

First of all, to appreciate what we are going to expect here in Australia, it's worth looking back at what happened last year. Here is a quick recap of the important events from Australia 2007.

[Begin Montage]

Chris: So how was Free Practice?

Me: Uh, limited to watching numbers scroll by, because ITV doesn't provide Free Practice.

Chris: Did you learn anything?

Me: Lots, actually, yes.

Chris: It was a bit wet, wasn't it?

Me: Yea, it was, ironically Honda did quite well in the wet. It started off with a damp track, dry line appeared, they went backwards, everybody else went forwards.

[Next Clip]

Chris: First fifteen minutes was sunny but windy.

Me: Yea, Barrichello was out early, he didn't make the cut.

Chris: Webber beat Coulthard.

Me: Yea, Coulthard didn't do very well at all, did he?



Chris: That was very embarrassing.

Me: Mr Newey's new car, not going to be impressed with that. He's not good at qualifying.

Chris: Davidson was really good, he got up into 7th, I think, something like that. That was very cool. And Hamilton beat Alonso.

Me: He did, he had the jump on him.

[Next Clip]

Me: Alonso did seem to be struggling through a good part of this qualifying, generally, even right at the early stages. He was always tweaking his car, trying out new things, he came in for new tyres when nobody else did, but he got it done in the end, didn't he?

Chris: Yea, exactly.

Me: He wasn't ever going to beat Raikkonen who was astonishing. That man was awesome, and would probably have beaten Massa had Massa got through. But Alonso got there in the end.

[Next Clip]

Me: Good race?

Chris: Yea, I thought it was alright. It wasn't as exciting as it could have been. But it was a good start.

Me: Exciting first corner?

Chris: Yes.

Me: Nobody crashed.

Chris: Nobody crashed. Hamilton did something groovy round the first corner, didn't he?

Me: He did. He ducked to the left, surprised Alonso, who wasn't expecting that. I tell you what else he wasn't expecting, he wasn't expecting a fast start from the BMWs, and he probably wasn't used to not getting off the line in the McLaren.

Chris: No, cos the Renault's are usually so quick at the start.

Me: Yes, he probably wondered what was going on.

[Next Clip]

Chris: By that time we'd pretty much lost sight of Kimi, miles out in front.

Me: Fastest lap, fastest lap.

Chris: Exactly. Alonso started catching Hamilton in the middle, but then he let him get away again.



[Next Clip]

Chris: And Kovalainen, he had just got himself up into a points position and then he just span on a corner for no apparent reason.

Me: Yea, into Turn 1. It was a hell of a recovery, shame he got there in the first place.

[Next Clip]

Chris: Alonso's plan worked, didn't it?

Me: He stayed out longer than Hamilton which gave him two laps to extend an advantage

[Next Clip]

Me: And later on, Coulthard in the other Red Bull, didn't he have an issue with Wurz.

Chris: Yea, that was weird, because Coulthard just came barrelling down and didn't seem to stop to go round the corner.

Me: I remember that happened last year to Rosberg, I think. Somebody was going round the same corner and another car came flying down and took them out.

Chris: He just flipped right over his head.

Me: Nearly took his head off with the rear wheel.

[Next Clip]

Chris: So very quickly, the top 8 were Raikkonen who gets 10 points, Alonso with 8, Hamilton with 6, Heidfeld gets 5, Fisichella 4, Massa gets 3, Rosberg gets 2, and Ralf Schumacher gets 1.

[End Montage]

This Year

Results in testing over the winter point towards it being the same contenders fighting for the title as in 2007. Ferrari appear to be very strong, with Raikkonen just edging out team mate Massa. McLaren also featured at the top of the time sheets several times throughout the winter, with new boy Kovalainen adjusting to the car quickly. Alonso may be struggling slightly, having returned to Renault, but he is determined to make the car faster, if not get some wins this year.

BMW are looking set to continue their strong form from last year, and Heidfeld is looking forward to the season getting started. He says: "Autumn in Australia brings the possibility of rain, which would make driving without traction control and engine braking control a real challenge."

With their preview quotes, BMW have given us a small insight into the amount of cargo that needs to be taken to a race. "80 people will be flying down under. Around 32 tonnes of air freight will also be sent on its way from Munich. Among other items, this includes three chassis, the engines, several sets of spares, 160 alloy wheels, 100 radio sets,



headphones, tools, computers and pit lane equipment.” That is a lot of stuff, but I’m curious why they need 100 radio sets when they’ve only got 80 people coming to the race.

Bridgestone have announced that the tyres to be used in Australia will be the medium and softs. Albert Park is essentially a street circuit, and is only used for racing once a year. Therefore, the track will need that little bit of extra time to improve and allow fast times.

Australia will see the debut of Force India F1, the team formerly known as Spyker. With renewed budget, energy and drivers, it will be interesting to see how they will compare to their previous incarnation, whether they can match and hopefully better Spyker’s performance.

Also towards the back of the grid, Honda’s sister team Super Aguri weren’t sure they would even make it to Australia, with money troubles halting a lot of their winter testing. However, they have made it, they’re ready to race, and fingers crossed they can make it worth the journey.

Free Practice begins tomorrow, so join me then when we look back at all the day’s events.

sidepodcast.com
YOUR WEEKLY F1 FIX