



F1 Digest 2009 – Turkey Preview

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With so much focus on who and what will be around in 2010, it's a relief to get back to this current season's racing.

Vital Statistics

The Turkish Grand Prix takes place on the 7th June at the Istanbul Park Circuit. The track features 58 laps around its 5.3 kilometres and the lap record is held by Juan Pablo Montoya who completed a 1:24.770 in 2005. Last year's pole position was Felipe Massa with a 1:27.617, and the fastest lap of the race was the other Ferrari, Kimi Raikkonen with a 1:26.506. Istanbul is also one of the few anti-clockwise circuits on the calendar this year. The early weather forecast for Turkey, has rain on Thursday, with the rest of the weekend sunny, but these things are always subject to change.

2008 in 30 Seconds

Last year's Turkish GP was dominated by Ferrari. Massa qualified on pole position, with the McLarens just behind, and Raikkonen in fourth. Massa was trying to extend his record of two race wins in Istanbul in a row, and was helped by teammate Kimi handing Kovalainen a puncture on the first corner. Hamilton managed to overtake Massa during the second stint as his car was faster and due a pit stop, but once all the strategies played out, it was Felipe who stood on the top step, Lewis second and Kimi third.

Team by Team

We'll start with BMW, as their preview quotes are always out nice and early. Kubica is hoping for change, as Istanbul is a completely different track to Monaco. He makes mention of the high-speed infamous Turn 8, but doesn't say whether he is looking forward to the race or not. Heidfeld is a little more positive, saying: "I hope our dismal performance in Monaco proves to be a glitch and that it was down to that particular circuit being unsuitable for our car. After all, there were signs of a forward trend at the previous race in Spain, and the next update is ready for Istanbul - also including a double diffuser."

Over at Toro Rosso, Bourdais thinks they're starting to get to grips with the car now, he says: "So far this year, it was often a case of waiting for Friday practice to see how the car would work and then establishing a set-up, but this weekend we will start with a good idea of what we want and that should see us being able to make more progress over the rest of the weekend." Buemi agrees that the car is looking better and better, and he's looking forward to having an incident free race so that he can concentrate on getting the most out of it.

Sister team Red Bull are the closest competitors to Brawn in the Championship, and team Principal Christian Horner doesn't think it's over yet, but this might be a crucial weekend: "This is an important race in the Championship and our target is to challenge the Brawns who have had a remarkable run so far. It was also clear at the last two races that Ferrari have made a significant step forward and I think we can expect them to play a key role this weekend, especially as it's a race they've won for the past three years."

Along with BMW, Toyota are another team who have taken a surprising downturn, but Trulli is keeping positive... sort of: "We are third in the Constructors' Championship which shows that overall we are in good shape this year and it is important we return to the performance level we had in the first four races. Istanbul is not one of my favourite circuits and I have not had much luck there in the past; but I am determined to change that." Glock is also feeling motivated and says getting back into the points, and preferably onto the podium is their goal.



Ferrari have a pretty good record at Istanbul, with Massa winning for the last three years, and Kimi the one before that – albeit in a McLaren. Their improved form should help them along, and Massa can't wait: "I do prefer fast flowing tracks and have a feel for all the corners here, as it's not good enough to only be fast over one particular section of the track. I think I've also found a good way to set up the car perfectly for this circuit." Raikkonen is also confident that the team will be winning again soon, although maybe not as soon as this race.

Current leaders in both championships, Brawn GP are feeling confident. Button thinks we might see increased passing this weekend. He says: "We've seen some excellent racing at Istanbul Park with good overtaking opportunities at turns one and three. You can also pass down the hill into turn nine and at turns twelve and thirteen if you brake late enough and get it just right." Barrichello says a little extra preparation is needed for Turkey: "It's tough driving an anti-clockwise track as the muscles on that side of your neck aren't used as much throughout the year so we do some extra training to prepare as some of the quickest corners at Istanbul Park are also left-handers."

For McLaren, Hamilton is already noting areas of concern: "I love racing in Turkey: it's a real challenge because you need to attack the lap to get a good time, but you also need to be careful with your tyres - if you push too much, particularly through Turn Eight, then your tyres are going to suffer." Heikki agrees, and adds that going through Turn Eight can be a great feeling if you get it right and go flat out.

Sutil is preparing for the fact that this weekend might not be good for them: "The main upgrades will now come in Silverstone so we have to be quite realistic about the performance this weekend. We have to keep pushing and try to have another strong qualifying that sets us up for the race." Fisichella is eyeing up the competition: "Looking back at Monaco, I would say we have more or less the same speed as Toro Rosso and Williams. It was a surprise to see BMW and Toyota on the back row and racing behind us, but they are strong teams with a lot of resources and you wouldn't count them out for long."

For Renault, Alonso thinks the new developments on the car over the next few weeks will help the team get back to the front. He says: "I'm not expecting to jump to the front of the grid in Turkey. However, I still believe that later in the year we can be back fighting for podiums and winning races, just as we did last year." That is some optimism, right there. Piquet has simple aims after a disappointing early retirement in Monaco: "My priority is to try and score some points to help the team in the championship. The track should suit the car and we will also have some new updates this weekend which should give us some extra performance."

Finally, we turn to Williams, with Rosberg suggesting that points are all they can hope for at the moment: "We'll have some upgrades for Turkey, so I really hope that maybe we can make a step forward and pick up points. It's so difficult at the moment though. There are teams that have come from behind us and are now in front, like Ferrari, and then teams like Red Bull, Brawn and Toyota are still ahead of us." Nakajima adds that he has little experience of the track after an early exit in 2008, so it's going to be a challenge, but he can't wait.

That's all for this preview edition of F1 Digest. Don't forget you can live comment through all the sessions with us on Sidepodcast.com/livecommenting. It's new and improved and definitely worth a look. I will be back after Free Practice on Friday with a full run down of all the action.