



## F1 Digest 2009 – Turkey Free Practice

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This is F1 Digest 2009 – Turkey Free Practice.

Free Practice is a day for testing, and today was a testing day for some.

### Free Practice 1

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Friday morning in Istanbul saw the track temperature at 32 degrees C and the air at 23. There was no sign of the thunderstorm that hit the track yesterday. As usual, the installation laps were completed before the cars returned to the garage to wait for the opportune moment. There was a considerable amount of dust on the circuit – unexpected, I think – as the teams sat it out for a really long time.

Hamilton was the first to set a lap time, but it wasn't a clean one, finding his McLaren off track here and there. However, he set the early, albeit slow, benchmark. Teammate Kovalainen joined him, and the Toyotas were out early as well. There were plenty of off-track excursions, and the dust was a real problem.

The action didn't really get going until towards the end, with Hamilton still leading, the Brawns and Red Bulls close behind. Massa and Raikkonen were also much improved in the Ferrari. With just half an hour to go, there appeared to be a problem with Turn 1. The corner is lined with AstroTurf, merely for looks, although I really should say it WAS lined with the turf. As the cars were rocketing through, the AstroTurf was getting ripped up, and soon it had got itself into a tangled mess. The session was red flagged while the marshals came and tidied it up, and we got going again with just fifteen minutes left.

Buemi and Bourdais were at the wrong end of the timesheets with Kovalainen also struggling, compared to Hamilton who was still leading the way. Lewis failed to improve on his own time initially, but then raised the bar a little higher, only to be beaten by Rosberg in the dying moments of the session.

### Results

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Rosberg finished on top of yet another Free Practice timesheet with a 1:28.952, completing a healthy 24 laps. Nico was the only man in the 1:28s with Hamilton behind on a 1:29.263. Trulli was third, with Vettel fourth and Massa fifth. Nakajima improved his Friday pace finishing the morning 6<sup>th</sup>, whilst Raikkonen was 7<sup>th</sup> and Alonso 8<sup>th</sup>. Barrichello was the highest placed Brawn in 9<sup>th</sup>, with Kovalainen able to improve to 10<sup>th</sup>. Button came in 11<sup>th</sup>, only two tenths of his teammates pace, followed by Sutil, Glock, Piquet and Webber. As is becoming the norm, the BMW boys were together at the back, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, Kubica ahead of Heidfeld. Fisichella split them and the Toro Rossos, with Bourdais finishing ahead of Buemi who was last.

### Free Practice 2

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The air temperature improved to about 27 degrees by the afternoon, with the track at 43. The second practice tradition of everyone out quickly was honoured, with all setting lap times almost instantly. Rosberg brought his Williams teammate to the top to take an early lead, until Kovalainen stole it from them.

Vettel came to a halt out on track with just four laps under his belt, and it appeared to be a problem with the drive shaft. Meanwhile, Hamilton completed a couple of laps with added spins. Kubica improved to second, then Alonso jumped up to second as well.

The general consensus of opinion was that the soft tyres were not favourable to the harder compound, and as such, we saw very little in the way of improvements throughout the remainder of the session.



Drivers kept on spinning, and towards the very end of the session, Nakajima and Fisichella made contact with each other, although there was little damage done. By the end of the session, no one had managed to knock Kovalainen off the top spot.

## Results

Kovalainen was fastest with a 1:28.841, and second place Alonso was also in the 1:28s. The pair of them were just marginally faster than the FP1 benchmark. Kubica was way up the order in third, with Nakajima fourth and Vettel in fifth – despite the fact he only completed the four laps early on. That says a lot about the session. Trulli was 6<sup>th</sup>, Rosberg 7<sup>th</sup> and Barrichello 8<sup>th</sup>. Webber did most of the work for Red Bull, completing 39 laps finishing 9th. Piquet was 10<sup>th</sup>, Massa 11<sup>th</sup> and Button in 12<sup>th</sup>. Hamilton was 13<sup>th</sup>, almost a second behind his teammate up front. Glock ended the day 14<sup>th</sup> with Raikkonen just behind him, and Heidfeld ended 16<sup>th</sup>. Sutil and Fisichella finished just one hundredth of a second apart, and once again Bourdais finished ahead of Buemi, who was last.

## Team by Team

Ferrari have been hoping to improve this weekend, and so far their Free Practice times don't really shed much light on the matter. Massa says: "We concentrated on finding the best set-up for Sunday's race and it's difficult to say where we are compared to the rest." He adds that their new parts have brought a small time saving but perhaps not as much as they were hoping for. Raikkonen struggled with the circuit, saying the track conditions changed very quickly.

For Toyota, Trulli finished the day in 6<sup>th</sup> and thinks that's pretty good: "The new aero bits are working well and they look like a good step which bodes well for the rest of the weekend. My lap times were competitive and the long runs went well so we will see what we can do for tomorrow." Glock didn't like the softer tyres but says that they'll work on the data to improve on them before qualifying tomorrow.

Sutil also found the tyres tricky, and almost indistinguishable, he says: "We struggled to get in a reasonable lap time and we were always doing the same time regardless of which tyre compound we were on. We now have to see what we are going to do but it may be different when the circuit has a bit more rubber down." Fisichella felt like he was going in the right direction in terms of setup by the afternoon, although his laptime doesn't reflect it because of the incident with Nakajima.

Bourdais sounds a little bit downhearted: "A tough day and I wish we could have been a bit higher up the order. We are not such a long way off, but there is a little bit missing to put us in the fight. I know that tomorrow will be better, but today we struggled to get the tyres working properly." Meanwhile, Buemi had an excuse to be at the bottom as it was his debut in Turkey: "My first day in an F1 car at this track was a very difficult one. On the plus side, we had no mechanical problems, so we did a high mileage. That means at least we have a lot of data to analyse to work out why we are slow and hopefully find a better set-up for tomorrow."

Over at Williams, Rosberg had a good morning, but ended up 7<sup>th</sup> by the time the day drew to a close. He says: "I think that the new aero parts we've brought out here are working as we expected them to, which is good. Having said that, levels of progress are always calculated in relation to other people and we are never sure where the others are, especially on a Friday." Nakajima believes the car is fairly quick, but also adds it's more a case of wait and see.

For Brawn, Barrichello found this practice session a little different to more recent races, as they don't appear as competitive as usual. However, as Button clarifies, once you get the setup going in the right direction, the car will get more balance and hopefully, they'll be back on top when it really matters.



Vettel explains the problem with his car was engine related, he says: "We made some changes to the car between the two practice sessions, which meant we were a few minutes late starting the second practice. It wouldn't have been a problem but then, as it turned out, I was only able to complete three laps in the afternoon due to the vibration in the car. I'll be relying on Mark's data from today - having one car running on Friday isn't ideal." Webber comments on the number of spins we saw today: "It's not the easiest circuit in the world to stay on the track – a few people were having excursions here and there, but being dusty off line, it's very easy to run out of talent here."

Kubica talks of the new aerodynamics on the BMW: "This was the first time we have had the double diffuser on our car. We did a couple of different tests so as to understand how it works and what effects it has on the car's balance. It is too early to say if it works well as the difference between Monaco and Istanbul is too large." Heidfeld isn't giving up yet: "My lap time doesn't look good but I still have confidence in our new aero package. Actually the balance of my car wasn't right, but Robert's lap time is quite promising."

For Renault, Alonso says the first day in Turkey always sees tough conditions but the track evolved throughout the day and will keep on doing so for the rest of the weekend. Piquet says that for him, today was all about the tyres, and in tomorrow's practice, he'll concentrate on setting up the car to his liking.

Finally, McLaren rocketed up the timesheets today with Heikki finishing on top. Hamilton tries to explain away his spins: "Before we arrived here, we thought we'd probably have the same sort of pace that we had in Barcelona, but it seems like we're a little bit faster than we anticipated. I had a couple of spins this afternoon – but that just proves I was pushing hard!" Kovalainen, though, is keeping his expectations in check: "I still think it will be a tough fight to get into the top 10 tomorrow, but we'll be trying the maximum to improve overnight so that we can join the fight. Overall, it's very encouraging that we have made another step forward."

### Quote of the Day

That'll do it for today, but please join me again tomorrow when we'll run through all the Free Practice 3 and qualifying action. I'll leave you with this quote from Martin Whitmarsh, who doesn't seem to subscribe to the theory that Friday's results are not to be believed: "It's always nice to see you've set the quickest time of the day. The reality is that the timesheets don't lie – our aim for tomorrow is to hopefully get both cars into the final session of qualifying. That's our realistic goal."