



F1 Digest 2009 – Turkey GP

This is F1 Digest 2009 – Turkey GP.

With Vettel on pole, and two Brawn's ready to snap at his heels, the first lap in Turkey would be crucial.

The Race

Ahead of the race, the air temperature was up to 32 degrees C, whilst the track was baking at 49. The cars got away cleanly once the lights went out. Trulli had a great start, zipping up to fourth place, whilst Barrichello essentially stood still, and ended up back in 13th. Round the first few corners, Vettel led, but then he made a mistake and ran wide, allowing Button in front. Barrichello and Kovalainen almost collided as the Brawn car tried to regain a position.

Fisichella came into the pits after just a couple of laps, the mechanics looked at the car, but eventually retired him. He had some sort of brake problem. Meanwhile, at the front, Button was streaking away into the distance.

Barrichello and Kovalainen were still battling, and it was a great fight between a KERS car and a non-KERS car. Rubens got past, but Heikki used his extra horsepower down the straight to take the position back. When Barrichello tried again, they touched wheels and he spun, which dropped him even further back. He quickly started his fightback again, this time getting past Hamilton and Piquet, despite being heard on the radio saying he didn't have 7th gear. One more overtaking attempt to get past Sutil, and the pair collided. Barrichello's front wing was damaged, and he had to pit to get a replacement.

The first round of pitstops began very early, with Alonso leading the way. Vettel and Trulli were just a lap or two behind him though. Button retained his lead through his pitstop, but found Vettel – who was on a three-stop strategy – rapidly catching him. There was very little action out on track as we watched the Red Bull attempt to catch the Brawn car, without success. Glock got past Trulli but the two were on different strategies, and this was clearly a team move, rather than for position.

The second round of stops saw Hamilton come out behind Piquet and we got to see our second KERS battle of the day. Renault weren't running the device, so Piquet managed to overtake, running with Lewis side by side through several corners. Hamilton was heavier, and eventually had to concede the position to Piquet. He lost another position to Buemi on the next lap.

Button's last pit stop saw him still in the lead, and when Vettel pitted for the third and final time, he found himself behind teammate Webber. Nakajima had a problem during his stop, the mechanics struggling with a wheel bin. The added time quite conceivably cost Kazuki his first points of the season. Barrichello also pulled into the garage and retired – the first for Brawn GP this year. During the closing laps, Vettel was catching Webber but was told on the radio that it wasn't going to happen.

Results

Button took his sixth win of the year, and Webber came in just under seven seconds behind, as the Brawn allowed his 17 second lead to shrink, cruising to victory. Vettel joined the pair on the podium, finishing third from his pole position. Trulli was fourth, Rosberg fifth and Massa sixth. Kubica picked up his first points of the year in seventh, and Glock made it a double points finish for Toyota in eighth.



Raikkonen finished just outside the scoring positions in 9th, with Alonso rounding out the top ten. Heidfeld finished where he started in 11th, with Nakajima, Hamilton and Kovalainen behind him. Heikki was the first man to finish a lap down, with Buemi, Piquet, Sutil, and Bourdais behind him. Barrichello and Fisichella were not classified.

Championship Standings

Jenson Button takes an even tighter hold on his championship lead, with 61 points to Barrichello's 35. Vettel is on 29 and Webber has caught up to his teammate, now with 27.5. Trulli rounds out the top five with 19.5.

In the constructor's championship, Brawn are streaking ahead with 96 points, and Red Bull are their closest rival but with only 56.5 points. Toyota have 32.5, Ferrari have 20 and McLaren have 13.

Team by Team

Let's start with Renault, and Alonso is frustrated that he couldn't get any points. He adds: "But to be honest, we couldn't expect much more today. We started in eighth position and having the lightest car on the grid penalised us because after the first pit-stop we just couldn't keep up with the pace..." Piquet had a mixed afternoon, saying his qualifying position ruined his afternoon really: "The car was good and I had some fun battles, including the one with Hamilton when I passed him, but our final result is disappointing."

The Red Bull team are also full of mixed feelings, with Webber happy to have picked up second, and Vettel disappointed with his first lap error. Mark says: "I knew I had to hang in there for as long as possible in the first stint. It worked out pretty well and I managed to go a lap longer and save fuel, which helped me gain some time."

Sebastian admits: "It was my mistake, it was extremely difficult there and I nearly did the same on the second lap. It was quite tricky, but I think without that there wouldn't have been a big difference, as Jenson was too quick today."

For BMW, Kubica is relieved: "It is good to finally score points. I think I raced well today. My pace was good and I made no mistakes." Heidfeld didn't have such a good afternoon, though: "For me today's race was disappointing because I lost all my chances in the beginning when I had a problem with the car. As early as the formation lap I realised the car pulled to one side and the front left tyre had no grip at all. It stood still when I tapped the brakes softly."

Kovalainen thinks McLaren can learn a lot from their afternoon, saying: "This was a character-building race for everybody in the team." Hamilton adds that they need to keep their heads up and keep pushing, even if they know the car is not good enough to win yet.

Another team trying to stay positive is Toro Rosso, and Buemi is doing just that. He says: "today, we looked a bit more competitive than over the rest of the weekend. For me, after the last two races, it was a good experience to finish the Grand Prix today and get more mileage." Bourdais, though, feels that starting at the back is a real problem as he lost a good couple of seconds with traffic on the opening lap.

Over at Williams, Nakajima had a chance to score points and narrowly missed out: "Everything was then going well until the second stop. What happened was a real shame as I think that was probably the best race of my career so far. Base-wise, we were competitive today, so thanks to the team for a good car and a solid strategy which allowed me to beat Raikkonen and Alonso on the track. We will just have to learn from the mistake in the pitstop and hope for a better result next time." Rosberg finished fifth and is happy with his points haul. Going forward, he wants to consistently be in the top eight.

Ferrari had a difficult day all round, despite picking up points with Massa. Raikkonen, though, he says: "It was definitely not the race we were expecting or the one we wanted. The first lap was decisive for me: I lost valuable places and then it wasn't possible to get them back because today we weren't quick enough." Felipe says that sixth was the best he could do and they need to make even more improvements before Silverstone.



Sutil is feeling pretty good about his weekend, despite finishing 17th: “It was not a real problem with Barrichello: he touched me once through a corner but I was just defending position. It was an interesting race, the car balance and the race pace were pretty good. Only the result was not as we would have liked, but it's been quite a positive weekend overall.” Fisichella’s bad luck at Turkey continued with a DNF, and he explains: “I have had a few problems with the braking this weekend. We changed all the brake systems to see if it made any difference but it was actually worse today as the car was almost completely locked.”

Toyota had a much improved weekend compared to Monaco, and Trulli says that he had a great start, making up several places, he got into a good rhythm and enjoyed being towards the front. Glock, meanwhile, scored another point despite starting way down the order. He said: “It's tricky to make up positions in Formula 1 but our strategy was right, the pit stops were great and the set-up worked really well so thanks to the team for a good job. Our target before the race was to get into the points so I am pleased to achieve that and I expect even more at the next race.”

Finally, Brawn GP did it again and for Button, it was easy: “I had a smile on my face for pretty much every lap today, the car felt that good, and I was able to back off in the last stint to conserve the engine.” Barrichello did not find it easy: “I was prepared to fight my way up the field but the damage caused to the gearbox by the problems at the start began to get worse so the team had to retire my car. It's difficult to have a day like this when you could see the pace of the car was fantastic but we will bounce back.”

Quote of the Day

That’s it for this race weekend in Turkey. Join me again for Silverstone in two weeks time, when Button will be aiming to get a win at his home race. I’ll leave you with this quote from Mario Theissen of BMW: “Conclusion of the weekend: Our car was fast enough today to score points thanks to our own performance. This is the basis from which we will prepare the next development steps.”