



F1 Digest 2009 – Britain Preview

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It's been a long couple of weeks full of letters, statements, arguments and politics. Bring on the racing at Silverstone's last grand prix.

Vital Statistics

The British GP takes place on the 21st June this year, at Silverstone for the last time before moving to Donington Park for 2010. The track is 5.1km long which translates to 60 laps, and Michael Schumacher has the lap record. He completed a 1:18.739 in 2004, whilst pole position in 2008 was a 1:21.049. Last year was a wet race, which explains Räikkönen's relatively slow fastest lap of the race, a 1:32.150. I would give you a weather forecast, but this is Britain. Anything can happen.

2008 in 30 Seconds

Last year was wet and cold but the big dampener came from Bernie Ecclestone and his Donington announcement. The cruelly timed news couldn't halt the enthusiasm from the crowds though, as Lewis Hamilton put on a strong performance in the wet to dominate the weekend. He qualified fourth but won the race in style, whilst rival Felipe Massa could only spin around the track. Hamilton finished on the top step with Nick Heidfeld and, after some very clever Ross Brawn strategies helped the Honda jump the crowds, a very surprised Rubens Barrichello.

Team by Team

Today we'll start with Renault, who are keeping their optimism levels high, despite struggling for the last few races. Alonso says: "The R29 has always worked well in high speed corners, and so we should be competitive this weekend. We will also have some new developments, which should give us some extra performance. In terms of the track, it's a great place to drive a Formula One car, and as this is probably the last time we race at Silverstone, I'll make sure I enjoy the experience." Piquet has narrowed down where he needs to improve to get better performance: "It's clear that I need to perform better in qualifying as starting so far down the grid is really hurting me in the races."

For BMW, Kubica sums up what he enjoys about racing in the UK: "I always like to go racing at Silverstone, the British fans are amazing. It's a historic motorsport place and you can always feel the special racing atmosphere there. Usually, the weather is quite unpredictable at Silverstone." Perhaps he doesn't necessarily enjoy that last one. Heidfeld also likes this track and is hoping to repeat last year's feat of second place on the podium.

Toro Rosso are the last team to bring a double decker diffuser onto the car and they're still not quite ready to do so. Team principal Franz Tost said: "It is not just a simple bolt on, you have to change the rear



suspension and the cooling, hydraulics and things like that. Also we've been waiting for Red Bull Racing to finalise what it thinks is the definitive design, as we are not in a position to try several different ones."

Over at Force India, the team are looking forward to a home race, as Sutil elaborates: "The team is based about 400m from the main gates and Silverstone feels like a second home to me now as I go there so often. The race is a very special one, not just because it's the home race. There is something about the atmosphere that has a buzz unlike anywhere else." Meanwhile, Fisichella gives us a quick insight into what makes the track a good one to drive: "The first part of the circuit from Copse to Becketts is very high speed, taken nearly flat. We slow down just a little bit at the end of the pit straight, then we go flat again. We lift the throttle pedal just a little for four at the middle of the complex, and then back on it again for five. Even turn seven, Stowe, is another nice quick fourth gear corner before a hairpin in turn eight, Vale."

Trulli is thankful that his belief Monaco's performance was a one off came true. He says: "It was very satisfying to get back on track with our strong result in Turkey. I believe we belong at the front of the grid this year, and it was important to bounce back and show how competitive we really are." Glock adds: "It was unfortunate my qualifying didn't go as planned in Istanbul, because I could have been up with Jarno in the top six, but I am really motivated to make sure everything goes to plan this weekend."

Brawn's dominance in the championship has only been bearable by the thought that Red Bull are pretty close behind. Now boss Christian Horner says they really aren't. After Turkey, he said: "It's going to be very difficult for us to make up the ground to Brawn but we have taken four points out of them in the constructors championship today. It's still a big lead, but still a long way to go." He added that some new developments to come from this weekend might help. Also at Red Bull, Webber says having a challenging teammate is great for both himself and for the team, as they're pushing each other forward.

Hamilton shares enthusiasm for the circuit: "Driving the track is incredible, too. I love Silverstone, it's an amazing place to drive. Copse, Becketts and Bridge are all absolutely fantastic, flat out corners, that really show you the power and grip of a Formula One car. It's a perfect place for the race, so let's hope it's not the last time we race at this track." Sadly, it looks like it will be for the next seventeen years at least. He also adds that seeing the fans waving their banners from the car makes all the difference to his race. Kovalainen had his first pole position in F1 at Silverstone last year, so he's hoping to get the car up the grid once again this weekend.

Williams are another team celebrating a home race and Rosberg is looking forward to seeing all the people from the factory who come to cheer on their team. He wants to get a good result to reward them for their hard work. Nakajima shares some insight about the track: "Silverstone is one of the older tracks we race at, and has kept much of its original layout, which has made it one of the few remaining true drivers' tracks. As you'd expect, it's therefore very demanding on the cars and on the drivers, but mainly on the tyres."

Button is looking forward to his newly competitive car giving the fans a show. He says: "I've raced at Silverstone from some fairly tough positions in the past but the fans have always been so supportive and I'd love to give them a performance they can really enjoy this weekend." Barrichello adds: "My win here in 2003 was really special and it's fantastic to be returning this year with a car that has the potential to compete for the victory. There's a lot of expectation going in to the weekend as our team's home grand prix, but we will remain calm and just focus on doing the best job that we possibly can."



Over at Ferrari, Kimi Räikkönen says the team are narrowing down on the problems in the car and there is no reason to give up just yet. "The team is continuing with its hard work improving the car and closing the gap to the leaders. The situation is much better in slow cars where we are really competitive, while we're suffering in the fast ones." He adds that Silverstone is one of his preferred tracks so he's hoping for good things. Massa is also optimistic, saying: "For a start, the new components we have on the car this weekend, including a front wing and a lighter chassis, should make us more competitive." However, he does note that Silverstone shares some characteristics with Turkey, and they didn't do so well there. Let's see what the weekend brings.

That's all for now, don't forget to visit sidepodcast.com throughout the weekend for live commenting. There'll be a new thread open for every session and I can't wait to see what you've got to say.