



F1 Digest 2009 – Britain GP

This is F1 Digest 2009 – Britain GP.

The Red Bulls are fast, the Brawns appear to be struggling, will anyone else pop up into the mix?

The Race

Ahead of the race, the track temperature was at about 29 degrees C, and the air at 16. It was brighter than we have seen so far this weekend, but as usual, to say warm would be pushing it.

Following his crash yesterday, Sutil's problems continued today as his Force India stopped on the installation lap. He returned to the garage with a fuel pressure problem and the team had to start him from the pitlane.

Those that started on the grid all had a clean getaway, with Vettel and two KERS enabled Ferraris making a really good start. Hamilton also popped up to 15th from the back of the grid. Button and Trulli both had poor starts, but Button was already making his way back up again, passing Massa on the second lap when the Ferrari made a mistake.

Alonso ran wide off track, and in regaining the racing line, he pushed Hamilton wide. The lost momentum allowed Kubica to overtake the McLaren.

On lap 4, Heidfeld was heard on the radio disagreeing with his engineers. They told him he had some damage and his aero data was not looking good, but Nick said he would stay out till the first pit stop.

There were two great battles out on track, as Alonso was desperate to get past the broken Heidfeld, whilst Hamilton was trying to regain his position from Kubica. Neither could get past but there was plenty of hustling going on.

Nakajima came into the pits, followed by Raikkonen the next lap, and the Ferrari managed to jump the Williams. On only lap 18, Vettel was streaking so far ahead that he came to lap Sutil. After 18 laps!

Barrichello and Webber pitted a lap apart, and similar to the previous battle, Webber came out ahead of Rubens, jumping the Brawn GP car in the order. Again, Vettel's massive lead saw him able to pit and come out ahead with no one troubling him. He was told on the radio that there was no need to push intensely hard and he could do with looking after his tyres. Other radio transmissions included Button complaining of massive understeer and Hamilton confirming that the balance of the McLaren was good but he had no grip.

Vettel was starting to make his way through the traffic, blue flags being waved everywhere. He stumbled across a fight between Hamilton and the Renaults, as Lewis passed Alonso and set off after Piquet. At this point, I must say, I'm not entirely sure how Nelson managed to get ahead of his teammate Fernando, because... this almost never happens.

Kovalainen came into the pits, and when he emerged, he came out just ahead of Hamilton. Lewis overtook Heikki – whether this was team orders or not we will never know, but Heikki says no. Bourdais was close behind and clearly not expecting the McLaren to move back in front of him, and before we knew it, the Toro Rosso had smacked into Kovalainen's rear tyre. Minus one front wing for Bourdais, plus one puncture for Heikki.



Both cars returned to the garage, both were patched up and sent out again, both were back within minutes to retire from the race.

There was a lull in the action after the second round of pit stops were completed, Hamilton had a big spin and went barrelling over the grass, but he took the long way round to return to the track safely. In the last few laps, Button found himself in sixth, where he had started from, and chasing down Rosberg. When I say chasing down, I really mean, bearing down on Rosberg so fast it was almost unbelievable. It was something like two seconds a lap, and although the old saying goes catching and passing are two very different things, it certainly spiced up the last few laps. Massa was dropping back into the clutches of Rosberg who was fighting off Button.

In the end, there was no change, but it was a sight to behold. Vettel took the dominant win, and the rest remained as they were. On the final cool down lap, Hamilton did some donuts for the crowd. Highly irregular but very, very cool.

Results

Vettel took the win with Webber in second for a great Red Bull 1-2. Barrichello managed to take third on the podium for the second year in a row at Silverstone. Massa finished 4th with Rosberg behind him in 5th. Button regained his original grid position of 6th, and Trulli and Raikkonen picked up the last remaining points. Glock and Fisichella rounded out the top ten – a great result for the Force India.

Nakajima was 11th, with Piquet finishing two places ahead of Alonso – first time ever – Kubica between them. Heidfeld was 15th, Hamilton 16th, and Sutil and Buemi were the last drivers classified. Bourdais and Kovalainen were the only retirees.

Championship Standings

Button still leads the drivers championship with 64 points but Barrichello has made some tiny inroads to his lead, now on 41. Vettel has 39, and Webber is still in contention with his teammate on 35.5 points. Trulli is still in the top five with 21.5 points.

For the constructors championship, Red Bull have done a lot for their cause today, but Brawn GP still lead and have broken over the 100 points threshold. They have 105 to Red Bull's 74.5. Toyota have 34.5, Ferrari have 26, and Williams 15.5.

Team by Team

For Toyota, Trulli thinks it was maybe the conditions that made his race harder than it needed to be. He says: "I expected the weather today to be a little warmer than it was and I was struggling a bit with my set-up, especially on long runs. Our strategy was okay but we expected more from this race so I am determined to make up for it in Germany." Glock felt like the early part of the race was the problem: "It's a pity to miss out on the points, especially as I was really quick out of traffic and at the end I was able to catch Kimi quite easily. The problem was at the first corner when I lost a few positions; that left me in traffic and compromised my race."

Piquet is seeing the silver lining, saying: "The overall result is disappointing today, but I think I had a solid race." Again, he thinks he needs to improve his qualifying performance to help his chances on a Sunday. Alonso says most of his problems, similar to Glock, came at the start when he lost two places and got stuck behind Heidfeld.

Massa is very impressed with his Sunday: "I almost feel as though I won the race! To start eleventh and finish fourth is a really great result. We weren't expecting it and so we are doubly happy. We had a good strategy and I pushed to the maximum at the key moments. Today, the KERS was a great help, especially at the start, but the whole car was



also working well.” Raikkonen has much more grounded observations: “Given where I was at the end of the first lap, I could have got a better result. A single point is definitely nothing to get excited about, but it's better than nothing.”

Hamilton found himself having a good time racing despite it not being for the win. He says: “I gave it my all today. Despite fighting for the lower positions, I was absolutely on the limit for the whole race. We knew it would be difficult, and I enjoyed my battle with Fernando, but we didn't have the pace today to get into the points.”

Kovalainen felt like he was on course for a decent finish but: “Bourdais just ran into the back of me and damaged the left-rear corner. I had to stop because the damage had made the car undriveable: we decided to retire for safety reasons.”

It's all about the 'what ifs' for Rosberg at Williams: “We still didn't get the result that we are capable of today, but Barrichello was slow in the middle stint and I was stuck behind him and that cost me the place to Massa. If that hadn't happened, we would have had a solid fourth place.” Nakajima can't quite figure out how he ended up 11th, saying although the result isn't ideal, there was no particular reason for it.

Over at BMW, Kubica played with the strategy: “Starting from P12 it was clear under normal circumstances we couldn't achieve much, therefore we decided to take a risk and start the race with a high fuel load and on the prime tyres. But it didn't pay off, because I had big problems heating up the tyres at the start, and I lost ground.”

Meanwhile, Heidfeld explains his front wing damage came at the start of the race when he went for a small gap at the first corner. It was fixed at the first stop, though.

Bourdais explains his side of the incident with Heikki: “Regarding my collision with Kovalainen, he changed line twice. At the exit to Stowe, I was on the normal line and he went to the inside, I moved to the outside, then he moved over so I moved across to the other side and he changed again. “ Did you follow that? Buemi had a tough weekend, and thinks the next race won't be much better: “Nurburgring will be another difficult weekend, but we are due to get some updates for Hungary, which will allow us to be more competitive and perform much better.”

Sutil knows the car just wasn't working today, he says: “We rebuilt the spare car after the crash yesterday caused too much damage to my race car, but then we had a problem on the formation lap with the fuel pressure. We could fix it and at least start but it was really disappointing today.” Fisichella though, finished 10th, and is relatively happy with that: “A top 10 finish was our target this weekend. We thought it would be difficult but actually today was a very good race for me and we achieved the maximum we could do. It was a fun race.”

For Brawn GP, Button says that all points are important, and three is better than nothing, but he found the race very frustrating, particularly as his home Grand Prix. Barrichello is reasonably happy though, saying: “I'm really proud of the third place that we achieved at Silverstone today. It's been a tough weekend for the team and we knew that if the track temperatures didn't increase, then it would be incredibly difficult to beat the Red Bulls.”

Finally, those Red Bulls in question. Webber says: “I should have been on the front row and, if so, I would have tried to make Sebastian work a bit harder in the first stint when I was behind Rubens. I saved a lot of fuel in the first stint, which meant we were able to jump Rubens at the first pit stop. I don't think I could have done much more today and congratulations to Sebastian.” And our race winner says: “The way the team has brought the car to where it is now is fantastic – and we've proven it's a step in the right direction, so I'm very pleased. I also want to thank Silverstone. I enjoyed this race so much – when I looked in the grandstands everyone was standing up and clapping and when I took the chequered flag the atmosphere was so great.”

Quote of the Day

That's it for this race weekend. We've got a three week gap now until the German GP, and I will be back then with coverage of all the racing action. I'll leave you with these thoughts from John Howett of Toyota: “Two points is far



less than we expected after the qualifying result but this will motivate us to develop further and come back stronger for one of our home Grands Prix at the Nürburgring."

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