



F1 Digest 2009 – Germany Preview

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After the longest gap we've had between races so far this year, we dive right back into the heart of the action at the Nurburgring.

Vital Statistics

The German Grand Prix is held at the Nurburgring this year, on the 12th July. There are 60 laps, each covering 5.1 kilometres, and Michael Schumacher holds the lap record there. In 2004 he completed a 1:29.468. Last year, the German race was held at Hockenheim, but the year before that, Nurburgring made its appearance as the European GP. Raikkonen scooped pole position with a 1:31.450, and Felipe Massa got the fastest lap of the race with a 1:32.853. The long range weather forecast for this weekend suggests rain on Friday, and changeable conditions for Saturday and Sunday.

2008 in 30 Seconds

The 2008 race in Hockenheim saw Hamilton take pole position and stretch out an early lead. Glock crashed heavily, bringing out a safety car. Hamilton's strategy saw him back to fifth, but during the final stages of the race, he made his way past Kovalainen, Massa and Piquet and eventually took the win. You heard me correctly, Nelson Piquet was fighting for the win, although he settled for second place. Webber retired, Barrichello collided with Coulthard which saw the Honda out, and Massa picked up third place.

Team by Team

Let's start with current championship leaders Brawn GP, with Rubens Barrichello looking forward to the race at the Nurburgring. He says: "The layout and flow is nice which allows you to get into a rhythm and there are some interesting undulations and bumps to look out for. I won the race here back in 2002 so the circuit always holds some good memories for me." Button has some notes to watch out for though: "The Nurburgring is a tricky circuit but there are two key characteristics which should be good for our car. It is a relatively slow circuit with a lot of medium-speed corners which are one of the strengths of the BGP 001. The Nurburgring is also one of the heaviest braking circuits on the calendar so you need a car which will be good through the four heavy braking zones."

Force India are quietly confident about their progress so far this season, and Sutil has some simple ambitions for this, his home weekend: "Q2 would be very nice and hopefully it would be enough for some points. It's definitely time to get a few." Fisichella adds that they are feeling much more motivated now, as well: "Every part we've put on the car this year has made a difference in performance so we're clearly going in the right direction. It's very motivating for the team and for me personally as a driver. When you're in the hunt you want it so much more."

Kubica admits that he doesn't really enjoy the track itself, but says: "The Nurburgring is our home race. Even though this season has not gone well for us so far, there will be a lot of BMW Sauber F1 Team fans there crossing their fingers for us. This is just the right time to put in a strong performance and record a good result." Heidfeld is doing his bit to interact with the fans, and also copying Jenson Button a little bit: "I will once again be lining up for my home race with a special helmet design. This year it has been created by a fan on my website, and he will present me with the helmet before the start of practice on Friday."

Over at Renault, Alonso is disappointed with how the team performed at the last race: "We thought that Silverstone would suit the car, but after qualifying we realised that we were not as competitive as we had hoped. In the race I made a poor start and got stuck behind Heidfeld who was heavy on fuel, which ended my chance of finishing in the



points. I still had some fun battles, especially with Lewis but I prefer to be fighting at the front.” Meanwhile, teammate Piquet will be experiencing this track for the first time. He says: “Last year the German Grand Prix was at Hockenheim where I finished second behind Lewis Hamilton. However, driving at the Nürburgring won't be a new experience for me as I raced there a couple of times in GP2 and I've always gone well and enjoyed it. I'm definitely looking forward to driving there in my Formula 1 car.”

For McLaren, Hamilton fondly remembers his race at the track in 2007, when he came from the back of the field to finish just outside the points and he really likes that they are deep in the heart of the forests as well. Kovalainen has a few more specifics: “It's got a variety of different corners - some quite tricky, technical sections that need a good flowing rhythm and some faster bends, where the car needs to be well set up. Cresting the rise through the uphill esses after the hairpin just feels fantastic in a Formula 1 car.”

Nakajima gives us an insight into what he's been up to in the enormous gap we've had between races. He says: “I had a full week off after Silverstone and went to Norway with my friend. We just drove around a lot and took in the landscape. The weather was great and we visited the most northern point of Europe which was really interesting, but really quite cold! I've been back in the factory every day since using the simulator and training in the gym in preparation for Germany.” Rosberg is eager to get out on track again: “Racing in front of your home crowd is a real buzz and the German fans in particular are really passionate about the sport, so there'll be a good atmosphere. After a long break since the last race, I can't wait to get back out on track now and getting another good result would make the weekend perfect for me.”

Over at Red Bull, Webber has dismissed any thoughts of team orders suggesting that it is way too early to be backing one driver over the other. He says: “You can't escape the fact that it would be different if I had won a race, but if I can qualify a bit higher and keep up the consistency then I'm confident there will be a win just around the corner. Sebastian is only 3.5 points ahead of me in the drivers' championship which means mathematically I still have a chance to do very well.” And Vettel adds to the home race talk saying: “During the 90 minutes of the race I do not think about which country I'm in, because I am concentrated on racing. But before and after, this is special because being at home is the best place to stay.” No word from sister team Toro Rosso though.

Ferrari have already admitted they may be concentrating on the 2010 car already – although in this current climate, surely it's impossible to know what that's going to look like? Either way, Raikkonen is concentrating on the task in hand, saying: “The track should be better for the F60's characteristics than Silverstone, but we'll get a clearer picture during Friday's free practice sessions. To be competitive you need a car with good traction, which is very stable while braking.” He concedes that the team would have to be very lucky to score a win this year.

Trulli can only be described as clutching at straws, he says: “It is actually a track I know really well and I have had some good days there, particularly in 1999 when I finished on the podium for the first time in Formula 1. I am always optimistic and it would be great to fight for another podium 10 years on from that.” For Glock, time is just flying by: “It's surprising we are already at the halfway point of the season - it has gone so quickly. I've had some good races so far and it has been nice to be battling at the front quite often. This weekend is another chance to do that and I can't wait.”

That's all for this preview show. Don't forget to join in live commenting the sessions on Sidepodcast.com, and call in your thoughts on 0121 28 TRACK. I'll be back after Free Practice with a roundup of all the action.