



F1 Digest 2009 – Germany GP

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The chaos of qualifying meant the Grand Prix had a lot to live up to. Could Webber take his first ever F1 victory?

The Race

There was rain overnight and showers in the morning, but the track was dry by the time the race got underway, and the sun was warming things up nicely. The track temperature was at 30 degrees C, and the air at 18. Glock was starting from the pitlane.

Alonso spun it on the outlap, which isn't exactly a good start to proceedings. Nevertheless, he regained the grid and the race got underway. Hamilton had a great start, and he and Barrichello turned up either side of Webber into the first corner. Somehow, Webber managed to come into contact with them both. Hamilton got a puncture, running wide off one side of the track, and again at the next corner. He had to return to the pitlane, which saw him at the back of the pack. Meanwhile, back at the first corner, Webber also managed to crash into Barrichello as well. Rubens managed to take the place, and got into the lead.

Kovalainen was up to third, having a similarly great start as Lewis thanks to the KERS. Both Ferraris had got ahead of Sutil, meaning he was down to eighth. Button was behind Massa, hustling him for position, and managed to get past round Turn 1. Vettel soon closed up behind the Ferrari as well. Button's next target was Kovalainen, but he couldn't get past the boost button, and Kovalainen started to cause a train.

The stewards announced they were investigating the incident between Webber and Barrichello. It seemed upon the replay that Webber seemed to steer right into the Brawn, and he got a drive through penalty. He came in for the penalty, just as Barrichello was taking his scheduled pit stop, so although Webber came out in front, he still had to make his actual stop.

Kovalainen finally pitted, allowing the train of cars to pick up speed. Bourdais was down in 19th place, and ran wide over the grass. He returned to the pitlane, pulled into the garage and retired. There were some rather warm and friendly hugs on the pitwall – almost goodbye hugs, you might say.

Webber came in for his stop and returned to the track ahead of Button in 8th place. The pair of them got caught up behind Kubica, who had yet to stop, and that allowed Button to close up, but once the BMW pulled into the pitlane, the Red Bull could race ahead. Sutil hadn't stopped yet and was up to second place, Rosberg also was yet to come in and took second when the Force India did pit. Sutil's aim was to get back out in front of the Ferrari's that he had lost places to on the first lap. He came out behind Massa and ahead of Raikkonen. Uh oh. Warning bells. Kimi wouldn't give up the place, and they collided, knocking pieces off the Force India and leaving debris all over the track. Sutil returned to the pitlane for a new nose, and ended up back in 16th.

Rosberg came in for his pit stop, and emerged in sixth, between the two Ferrari's. The stewards announced they would investigate the incident between Sutil and Raikkonen after the race.

Meanwhile, Button pitted, as did Nakajima. Next time round, Barrichello was in for his stop, and it was a long one. We thought he was changing his strategy, but it turns out it was a fuel rig problem. He came out ahead of Raikkonen, behind Rosberg. Button just drove past Raikkonen, as the Ferrari slowed right down. Kovalainen quickly caught up right behind him as well. Kimi pulled into the garage and retired.



Alonso, who I had actually forgotten was in the race, managed to get past Timo Glock, who still hadn't come in for a pit stop yet. Webber was out in front, putting in fastest lap after fastest lap. Glock came in for his first stop – having fuelled up from the pitlane – he had managed to complete 37 laps, and came out in 15th place.

Alonso, him again, was chasing Kovalainen, but the dark clouds were rolling in, and Hamilton reported that it was raining as he came into the pitlane. However, the FIA forecast predicted no rain within the next 30 minutes which would be to the end of the race.

Alonso was still chasing Kovi, but the McLaren pitted allowing the Renault past. With the track temperature dropping, the Brawn GP cars started to struggle, and Button looked like he was still trying to warm up his tyres by weaving around the track, as he was following teammate Barrichello.

Webber came into the pits, which meant if it rained, he would have to come in for an unscheduled stop which would mess up his strategy. Vettel pitted a few minutes later, putting on the soft tyres, and Massa went in just after. Alonso pitted and slip slid his way out of the box. There was some light rain in the paddock, it seemed, but it hadn't quite stretched to the track yet.

When Alonso exited the pitlane, he ran Piquet off the road when he came out, he was up in seventh, putting in the fastest lap of the race. The two Brawn cars were still following each other, with Button getting agitated on the radio, seemingly wanting to get past his teammate. The mechanics were in the pitlane and ready to accept a car, but neither of them came in. On the next lap, it was Barrichello who dived in for a stop. Button came in next time, and was out ahead of his teammate.

With the last few stops, the order was regained with Webber in the lead, followed by Vettel and Massa, with the Brawn boys following further back. Things remained like this until the end of the race.

Results

Red Bull did their best they could do with Webber's maiden win also signalling a 1-2 victory for the team. Vettel was just over nine seconds behind his team mate. Massa joined the pair on the podium, with Rosberg putting in a great drive for fourth place. Button and Barrichello finished fifth and sixth, with two tenths splitting Rubens from Alonso in seventh. Kovalainen picked up the final point in 8th place. Glock started from the pitlane and finished 9th, very impressive for Toyota.

Heidfeld was 10th, Fisichella up in 11th, followed by Nakajima, Piquet and Kubica. Sutil ended up 15th, whilst Buemi was 16th and Trulli in 17th – not so impressive for Toyota. Hamilton was the last classified in 18th, whilst Raikkonen and Bourdais retired.

Championship Standings

Button still leads the drivers championship on 68 points, with Vettel behind on 47 and Webber right behind him on 45.5. Barrichello has 44 points whilst Massa is much further back on 22 points.

In the constructors, Red Bull have made a big dent in Brawn's lead, with the top team on 112 points, and Red Bull on 92.5. Toyota have 34.5, whilst Ferrari have 32 and Williams have 20.5.

Team by Team

We'll start with Brawn, because it's no secret how frustrated Barrichello was after the race. However, by the time the press releases came out, he was a little calmer, saying: "It was a combination of things really which are now very



clear to me having spoken to the team. We didn't have enough pace compared to the Red Bulls to win but the fuel rig problem at my second stop where we had to switch rigs probably cost me a place on the podium." Jenson didn't exactly have a better day, he says: "All points are valuable but my race started badly and didn't get much better today."

BMW continue to struggle for pace, leaving both the drivers disappointed. Heidfeld points out that he had some bad luck during a pit stop as he had to wait for a Renault to go past which cost him valuable seconds. Kubica found his problem to be tyre related: "I changed to primes for the second stint and after a couple of laps I noticed that the tyre pressures were not right. Unfortunately this cost me a lot of lap time and I still had around 20 laps to go."

Ferrari had a very mixed day, with Massa on the podium, which he's quite impressed with: "It's been such a long time since I made it to the podium! I really wanted it after a very difficult first half of the season. Little bit little, we are improving and we will do all we can to get back to winning ways this season: I want to start hearing the Italian and Brazilian national anthems as soon as possible!" Raikkonen didn't make it to the end of the race and not for the first time, he says: "Germany definitely doesn't seem to bring me luck. I don't know how many times a problem beyond my control has forced me to retire and this time it was down to debris."

Kovalainen is revelling in his good fortune: "If you'd told me on Friday that I would score points today, I wouldn't have believed it. This weekend has been difficult - it's been hard to get the tyres working and to find grip, but we kept pushing throughout every session and things started to turn around." The luck was not on Hamilton's side though, and he knows his race was over at Turn one, adding that with a puncture it was like driving on ice.

Toro Rosso didn't have a particularly easy afternoon, with Buemi suggesting that the tyres are impossible, and he can't wait for the new updates at the next race. Bourdais had hydraulic problems and thinks it's a shame because they had a good strategy despite being at the back.

Alonso is keeping his chin up and hoping for good things in the future, although finishing seventh isn't so bad really. He says: "The race was tough and we were stuck in traffic, but the car has clearly improved as I set the fastest lap and scored some points. The most important thing I take from the weekend is that we are competitive and we can be optimistic for the races to come." Piquet isn't happy with his day's work: "I'm disappointed not to get a better result. I lost ground at the start as I had some problems warming up the tyres. After that I got held up in traffic, which made it very difficult to make any progress in the second half of the race."

Over at Force India, you could forgive Sutil for being terribly disappointed but he's trying to look on the bright side: "We shouldn't be that disappointed with this result as we have had a good weekend and the next one will come very soon. All our development shows we are on the right track and that we are much more competitive." He also added: "Overall I think we've learnt a lot; it's the first time starting in the top 10 and it's a different race up there!" Fisichella has that age old problem that he just ran out of laps. He says given a few more, he may have been able to challenge Heikki and get into the points. Oh, those what ifs are glorious, aren't they?

For Williams, Rosberg is super happy: "It was a fantastic result for us today. As I started 15th, I honestly wasn't expecting too much but I took a few chances on the opening lap and finished it in 9th place! Although I had more fuel than anyone else, I kept pushing hard and that, together with a little luck that Heikki Kovalainen had created a bit of traffic jam behind him, helped for sure." That Kovalainen played a big part today, didn't he? Nakajima reveals something I hadn't spotted: "My race was really defined by my first lap. I was hit by Jarno and almost went off, but in the process I dropped right to the back of the field. It was a shame because my race was ruined from there."

The other half of that accident, Trulli explains his side: "There were several cars fighting for position but I suddenly saw another car go past me and jump over my front wing because there was no space. I couldn't see that part of my



wing but I could feel there was something wrong so I came in and the team changed it.” That explains his 17th place finish then. Glock doesn’t sound happy enough, if you ask me, he says: “In general I am reasonably satisfied with my performance today because I started from the pit lane and finished ninth on a track where overtaking is very difficult.” He just says he wants to qualify better so he can finish higher up and in the points.

Finally, Red Bull had the best day a team can have really, minus one small drive through penalty. Vettel simply says: “Congratulations to Mark, he was unbeatable today – he was quicker than all of us, so he totally deserved to win. I’m very happy with the result and in the end it was a good recovery.” And our race winner Webber: “It was testing to get the victory today, I lost Rubens completely at the start; I thought he was gone a little bit to the left so I went to the right and banged into him. That’s not normally my style and I got a drive-through penalty for that, so had to recover. My engineer kept me calm and I pushed as hard as I could when I needed to, so it’s a great day.”

Quote of the Day

That’s it for this race weekend. Next up, we’re in Hungary, so please join us then for more live commenting and plenty more from F1 Digest. I’ll leave you with this thought from Stefano Domenicali: “Once again this weekend we have seen an incredible see-sawing in performance between some of the teams compared to the previous race and within this Grand Prix itself. There are many variables, especially those linked to the behaviour of the tyres which does not seem to be completely under control: getting to grips with this could be very important for the rest of the championship.”

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