



F1 Digest 2009 – Hungary Free Practice

This is F1 Digest 2009 – Hungary Free Practice.

With hotter temperatures, a championship at stake and a new driver in town, Free Practice is increasingly important.

Free Practice 1

The temperatures were soaring before any action got going, with the air about 24 degrees C and the track at 30. Vettel was the first man out on track, and it was a Red Bull run as Buemi and Alguersuari followed him. Kubica also headed out early, and the rest followed for their standard installation lap.

With the rest of the cars safely tucked back in the garage, Alguersuari took full use of the track and crawled around some practice laps. At first he was about eight seconds off the pace, but he gradually improved. Teammate Buemi came out and joined him and the pair of them leapfrogged each other to the fastest lap.

It was about half an hour into the session that the rest of the pack began to stir. Trulli and Glock both posted times, with Jarno taking the lead. Alonso took it from him, Trulli took it back, and then Massa jumped them both.

Vettel posted the fastest time briefly, before Rosberg took it from him. A few laps later he was complaining of the tyre temperatures being too high, and was told to back off. He quickly fell down the order. Massa ran wide, and then he did it again, but still managed to improve to fourth.

As the session drew to a close, Webber jumped up to P1, but then Hamilton leapfrogged him and Rosberg put in another speedy lap to push the Australian down to third. With just seconds to go, Kovalainen flew round the track and posted the quickest time, giving no one a chance to beat him.

Results

So, Kovalainen was fastest then with a 1:22.278 having completed 21 laps. Rosberg was second, Hamilton and then Webber behind him. Nakajima finished the morning 5th, with Trulli in sixth, and the two Ferraris 7th and 8th, Raikkonen ahead of Massa.

Alonso was the first man to drop into the 1:23s, with Button, Kubica and Heidfeld behind him. Barrichello was 13th, with Glock 14th, then Vettel, Fisichella, Piquet and Sutil. Finally, the two hardest working men out there, Buemi completed 37 laps, whilst Alguersuari was last with 42 laps and just three tenths off his teammates pace.

Free Practice 2

Between the two sessions, things hotted up even more, with the track up to 45 degrees, and the air at 28 degrees C. Heidfeld was the first out on track, and there were no installation laps to be had, it was straight on to the lap times. Almost instantly, though, we saw cars running off track, with Buemi, Raikkonen and Massa all having issues.

At the front, Rosberg put in the fastest time, then Vettel who was pushed down by Webber. Kovalainen repeated his morning form, jumping up to P1. Meanwhile, Massa ran wide again, and in a crazy few moments, Trulli had an issue out on track and had to pull to one side, whilst Barrichello spun off but carried onwards.

Kovalainen held his lead at the top, whilst Webber slipped into second behind him, and Massa, well, he ran off track again. Second place Webber then slowed right down, crawling back to the pitlane, his session already over.



The final dash for a fast time, saw every single person, bar Webber, out on track, but only Hamilton could take the battle to his teammate.

Results

Hamilton and Kovalainen both completed 36 laps, and finished just five hundredths of a second apart. Close at the top. Rosberg was 3rd, with Webber 4th, and Nakajima, Vettel and Barrichello behind him. Trulli was 8th, with Glock in 10th, and Heidfeld between them.

Raikkonen ended the day in 11th, with Alonso, Button and Kubica behind him. Piquet was 15th, with two Force Indias behind him – Sutil ahead of Fisichella. Massa, after his many spins, ended up 18th, with the two Toro Rossos last again, Buemi ahead of Alguersuari.

Team by Team

Let's start with Toyota, and Trulli isn't happy with his day's work: "It was a difficult day for me and I had a bit of trouble. It was disappointing we couldn't do all the work we had planned in second practice due to the problem but the team did a great job to get the car ready again so quickly." Glock is feeling better about his Friday progress though: "There wasn't a lot of grip this morning or for the first few laps of the afternoon session so it was a little tricky but it improved after that. So I am happy with how things have gone for me, but of course we still have work to do to improve the set-up even more."

Over at BMW, they're all feeling a bit more confident that they've found the root of the problem with the car and progress can be made. Heidfeld had problems with the car though: "You can feel the tyre compounds are now more similar to each other than they used to be, but I'm afraid the tyres are still not really good. Despite the traffic on the track, I was lucky this time and had quite a few clear laps." Kubica adds that they added some new parts and a new front wing, but he wasn't particularly happy with how it went.

Nakajima had very little to say about his day, just that it was good and they got lots of data. Rosberg adds that it's hard to decide on a strategy: "We will have to analyse carefully which way we go in the race and I think that the answer might not be too obvious. We also spent some time testing the new aero parts we have here."

For Ferrari, Massa had a tough day, saying: "I struggled a lot just to get the balance on the car to an acceptable level and found the tyres offered little grip, especially the harder ones, to such an extent I wasn't able to do a real long run on either types of tyre." He also adds that going off track one of the times damaged his suspension, which made things even worse. Raikkonen is quite happy: "There are still some small things that we can work on to make it quicker, but overall, I am reasonably happy. This year, the supersoft tyre has always been very difficult to manage, but here it seems the situation is rather more straightforward."

Toro Rosso had their new star driver, with Alguersuari learning the ropes. He says: "The hardest part was the entry into the high speed corners, which I need to take much faster, but that will come as my confidence grows and I do more kilometres. Every time I went out from the garage, I was learning and felt more comfortable with the situation." And Buemi had a, um, glowing report for the other side of the garage: "Having a new team-mate does not affect me that much as I drive my car on my own! The team seems happy and he produced a good performance."

Force India ended the day 16th and 17th with Sutil suggesting that the balance on the car needs a lot of work, and the bumps are causing them problems. Fisichella was a bit happier, but suffered with traffic today.

For Renault, Alonso says: "The morning was all about getting used to the car again and in the afternoon we concentrated on understanding the two different tyres, which gave us some useful information for the race. We



managed to complete our programme and I think we can be happy with the job we have done today." Piquet admitted recently that his job at Renault isn't necessarily secure, and he needs to work well to prove to the team he deserves his seat. He finished 15th, but said it was taking him a few laps to learn the new parts on the car.

Red Bull are coming off the back of their win in Germany, and Webber wasn't thrown by anything today: "It's normal for Budapest to be pretty warm, so we've experienced the normal characteristics and the problems that Budapest throws at the engineers and drivers. The car seems to be going okay at the moment - we'll see what fuel loads people are running as usual tomorrow and on Sunday." Vettel says it was really, really hot, and he's not 100% happy yet, but he's getting there.

Barrichello lets us know what was on his task list today: "Our programme today was to work with the two tyre compounds to fully understand their working range and the impact on the set-up and balance of the car." Button is feeling pretty upbeat: "It's been a much better Friday for us than at the last couple of races. Obviously the temperatures are higher here which works in our favour and we have some good aerodynamic updates to the car for this race."

Finally, McLaren finished on top, and Hamilton is feeling good, and thinks the track might have a lot to do with it: "Firstly, I love driving here: it's quite a complex circuit, very technical, lots of bumps and you need a good rhythm. It's definitely in my top five tracks on the calendar." Kovalainen adds more information about the new parts on his car: "I've got the full upgrade package that Lewis raced at the Nurburgring and the car now feels much better to drive. We've got a new floor, new front wing, updated bodywork and some small changes to the suspension. It's a big package – and I know how hard the team has worked to get everything here. There are still components arriving at the circuit today!"

Quote of the Day

That's all for this show. We've enjoyed Free Practice today and tomorrow it's qualifying – arguably the best day of the weekend. I'll leave you with this quote from Sam Michael at Williams: "We spent the afternoon session evaluating the two different tyres, both of which look quite good for us, so from here we will be concentrating on qualifying and refining the set-up for tomorrow."