



F1 Digest 2009 – Hungary Qualifying

Welcome to F1 Digest 2009 – Hungary Qualifying.

One final practice session to cover before the ever-crucial qualifying. Who will get pole?

Free Practice 3

Conditions were very different to yesterday, with rain overnight, and much cooler temperatures. The air was at 21 degrees, and the track 26.

Fisichella was the first man out, but all were eager to get an installation lap under their belts. After about fifteen minutes, Trulli headed out onto track, with teammate Glock close behind him. Glock put in the faster time, as Trulli struggled to control his car, wobbling just a little bit. Both Rosberg and Alonso beat the Toyotas though, whilst the Force Indias settled in behind.

Glock reported a problem with hydraulics over his team radio and returned to the garage. The Toro Rosso boys headed out, with Buemi jumping into second and Alguersuari up to fourth. Then Rosberg and Raikkonen put their mark on the timesheets again. Buemi and Rosberg started trading fastest laps.

Kovalainen popped up to P1, whilst Hamilton was further back, down in 14th. On his next lap, though, he rocketed up to P1. Glock's car needed some work, and he was elevated up whilst still sitting in there, and then he didn't have room to get out, so he was stuck watching the session from up high.

With half the session gone, most of the drivers returned to the pit lane to regroup, leaving Trulli, Massa and Kubica out on track. Kubica came in, Alguersuari came out and the three continued to lap by themselves.

Glock finally managed to get out of the car, as they had to take it to pieces. He made his way to the pit wall, his morning session over. The rest of the drivers began to head out on the circuit, as Alguersuari popped into second, Buemi close behind him in 5th. Alonso jumped up to second, as Jaime and Massa came into the pits. Everyone was out on track bar those two and Glock.

Alonso put in the fastest lap, but Hamilton took it back again. Meanwhile, Sutil had run wide, got dirt on his tyres and run straight off into the barriers. He was fine, but the car needed to be recovered, giving the Force India mechanics some work to do.

In the last ten minutes, the Toyota team got Glock back out on track, very impressive work from them, as Massa went fastest, and Alguersuari ran a little bit wide. Lewis Hamilton jumped up to P1 and continued to improve on his own time. With three minutes to go, everyone was out on track bar Alguersuari, but no one could beat Hamilton's time, except Hamilton himself.

Results

Hamilton finished the morning on top with a 1:21.009 after completing 19 laps. Heidfeld came in second, with Rosberg and Kovalainen behind him – six tenths between the two McLarens. Buemi was impressively high up in 5th, and Glock in 6th, also good going as we didn't think the car would make it to the end of the session. Massa was 7th with Nakajima, Webber and Vettel behind him. Kubica was the first to fall into the 1:22s in 11th, and Trulli, Barrichello and Piquet were behind him. Raikkonen was down in 15th, but that was just three tenths off his



teammate Massa in 7th. Alonso finished up 16th, with Button behind him in 17th, and then Alguersuari not last for the first time this weekend, with both Force Indias behind him – Fisichella ahead of Sutil.

Qualifying

Things warmed up for qualifying, with the air at 23 degrees, and the track way up to 41 degrees C. Fisichella was lined up at the end of the pitlane as the lights went green, he and Alguersuari were the first guys out. The early benchmark was from Buemi though, as all bar the BMWs and Sutil headed out on track for a first lap. Alguersuari was in third, with plenty of drivers behind him, until the Ferraris and Rosberg jumped ahead.

Raikkonen posted P1, Hamilton slipped into P2, to be demoted by Rosberg, then all three were bumped down by Vettel who put in the quickest lap so far.

Heikki ran wide, as did Heidfeld, who kicked up lots of dust, but they both continued onwards. Half the field returned to the pit lane to prepare for their final laps of the session. With five minutes to go, Sutil came out on track for the first time, but returned to the pits without setting a lap time.

Also in the drop out zone, Kovalainen, Alguersuari and two Toyotas. With two minutes to go, every single driver was out on track, including Sutil, as Kovalainen improved to 7th, dropping Piquet into the drop zone. Trulli improved up to 12th, Rosberg went fastest, then Alguersuari slowed right down and coasted to the side of the track – yellow flags being waved. It ruined a couple of laps, however most managed to squeeze across the line in time to set another one. Fisichella jumped up to 11th, and Glock pulled himself out of the bottom five. Alonso also managed to escape the drop, but that dropped both BMWs into the bottom five.

The fastest three were Rosberg, Hamilton and Webber, whilst dropping out Heidfeld, Fisichella, Sutil, Kubica and Alguersuari. Bad times for the BMWs.

Raikkonen and Trulli led the way for the second session of qualifying, but everyone was soon out there putting in some benchmark times. The Red Bulls staked their claim at the top with Vettel ahead of Webber, but the Brawns seemed to improve with Barrichello third and Button sixth.

Rosberg topped the Red Bulls and then Alonso popped up to P1, whilst the rest came in for their pit stops. The bottom five featured Piquet, Buemi, Glock, Raikkonen and Trulli, but all bar Buemi were out trying to change that. Trulli improved up to 6th, and Raikkonen did the same, pushing the Toyota down a place.

Alonso returned to the garage, obviously happy with his session's work, as Vettel jumped above him, and Raikkonen popped into second. Then Webber went even faster. Suddenly, Massa was in the barriers, and yellow flags were being waved. The session came to an end, as Massa remained in the car. The medical car arrived quickly to attend the scene.

The fastest three for the second qualifying session was Webber, Hamilton and Nakajima, whilst dropping out Buemi, Trulli, Barrichello, Glock and Piquet.

Massa was taken to the medical centre, and then to hospital in the helicopter, but we saw him moving as he came out the ambulance. On the replays, it looked as though a spring flew off the back of Barrichello's car and hit Massa as he approached the corner.

After a hefty delay, the third session got underway. The early leaders were Webber, Hamilton and Alonso. Button still hadn't left the garage, and waited until there were just three minutes to go. Rosberg jumped up to 5th, and then the timing screens died and no one knew what was going on.



Cars crossed the line, we didn't know. Drivers got out of their cars, we didn't know. They didn't know. No one knew. They all got weighed and stood about laughing, and even Bernie made an appearance. Finally, we found out it was Alonso, Vettel and Webber.

Results

So, Alonso was on pole with a 1:21.569, pole position for the Spaniard for the first time since Monza 2007. Vettel 2nd, Webber 3rd, with Hamilton behind in 4th. Rosberg starts 5th, Kovi 6th, and then Raikkonen in 7th. Button qualified down in 8th, followed by Nakajima, and Massa shows as 10th on the timing screens.

The rest of the grid lines up as Buemi, Trulli, Barrichello, Glock, then Piquet, Heidfeld, Fisichella, Sutil, Kubica and Alguersuari.

Fuel Loads

Alonso is very, very light. He has enough fuel to take him just 13 laps, the lightest man of the field. Behind him, Vettel is one lap longer than Webber, and the same as both Rosberg and Kovalainen in 5th and 6th. Button starts 8th but is the heaviest man of the top ten. The heaviest of the entire grid is Barrichello who should go to approximately lap 37.

Team by Team

Firstly, there are no post-qualifying Ferrari quotes but the team have released a statement on Massa's condition. He was taken by helicopter to a local hospital, where he had to undergo surgery for damage to the skull, however they have confirmed that the surgery was successful and he's now under observation. Massa also sustained concussion and a cut on his forehead.

On to the other teams, then, Trulli isn't happy with the car at all this weekend, and he says they just don't have the pace to keep up near the top, and more importantly, they're not entirely sure where they are lacking. Glock also is disappointed, saying: "...especially because this morning I felt we had quite a good package and the car felt competitive, even though I lost some time. For some reason we just couldn't get the best lap time out of the car, which is a pity."

Williams had a relatively good day, but don't seem that impressed with it. Nico says: "From my point of view, fifth place was okay today and gives us a really good chance for tomorrow. Overall, we have been looking good here and my target remains a podium." And Nakajima adds: "Initially qualifying went well, certainly up until Q2. I was pleased to make it through into the final ten again, but perhaps I didn't make the most out of the final session. I struggled with tyre warm-up and couldn't find the lap time."

BMW are really not happy at all, although Kubica assigns some of it to bad luck. He says: "We were a little bit unlucky in qualifying. I had yellow flags on the first quick lap of my second attempt. On my second and final quick lap I had two cars in front of me. Although they moved off line they created dirty air. So I lost a lot of time as the car was sliding." Heidfeld starting 16th simply says: "Today's result is a true disappointment. I was hoping to make it into the top ten." He adds that he also suffered with traffic, and ran wide on one of his laps.

Over at Red Bull, both drivers got into the top three, and Vettel is happy with that. He says: "I had a pretty difficult start to the weekend and was struggling with the balance of the car in yesterday's practice, but overnight we made a good step forward and it's now looking good for the race." Webber isn't quite so happy, but realistic: "Not a great session for me in Q3, as I made a mistake in Turn 2. Sebastian did a clean lap and it should be a good race between



all of us tomorrow. Well done to Fernando too, it's good for Renault to have another engine up here and to be on pole."

Force India were battling the odds today. Fisichella suffered from a lack of grip and says: "We knew it was going to be difficult today with the low grip but to just be one or two tenths from getting into Q2 is a little bit frustrating." Whilst Sutil admits he made the mistake that saw him into the barriers. He adds: "The guys did a great job to get the car ready but there was only enough time at the end of the session for two flying laps. All we needed was an extra couple of tenths that would have helped us go into Q2 so without the accident I think we could have been quite good."

Our rookie driver of the weekend, Alguersuari qualified last but isn't letting that get to him: "Finishing qualifying with a failure is never good - I had a problem with the throttle control system - but we have to be content because I didn't make any mistakes so far this weekend. On my first two sets of tyres I did a good job. As for the race, I am really looking forward to it and I will be happy if I finish." I like a driver with modest aims. Buemi says: "Finishing eleventh, one tenth off P10 shows we have made progress, a very big step forward since the last race. It was a good qualifying for us, even if it is frustrating to finish eleventh because you want Q3."

The Brawn drivers aren't exactly optimistic, but Button knows he will do the best he can, saying: "We were on the edge of the working range for the tyres today with the cooler temperatures so the car wasn't handling quite as well as in practice. Starting from eighth on the grid isn't ideal and I'm on the dirty side but we're remaining positive and will see what we can do from there." Barrichello also adds: "Starting from 13th at this circuit where it is almost impossible to overtake will make for a really tough race tomorrow but at least we can choose the fuel load and we'll give everything to get some points."

McLaren had been looking really strong in Free Practice, but it didn't quite come together for Hamilton. He says: "It was so hard out there this afternoon. Maybe we could have been closer to the front because my final lap wasn't a great one, but fourth is a good position from which to start tomorrow's race. We're still not quick enough and need to keep pushing but, nonetheless, it feels great to be back up there competing for the first few rows on the grid." Kovalainen says grip was a real problem during qualifying but: "It was better on heavier tanks, but it was still difficult to get enough heat into the tyres. At one point, I overcooked them – it was tricky to get the right balance, so sixth was the best I could do today."

Finally, Renault have found their way to pole once more, but not with Piquet. He says that there was a lot of traffic in Q2, so he couldn't repeat his good lap times that he managed in Q1. Pole went to Alonso, then, and he is happy with that: "We knew after Germany that we were more competitive and that the car has really improved with our latest updates, so we decided to take an aggressive strategy this weekend. Tomorrow, our aim is to finish on the podium and starting from pole position gives us a good chance of doing that."

Quote of the Day

Naturally all the teams and a lot of the drivers sent their best wishes to Massa, but I will only quote one to end on. Norbert Haug of Mercedes says: "First and foremost, our thoughts are with Felipe Massa who suffered a terrible accident in Q2, which was beyond his control. Hopefully he will recover soon."