



F1 Digest 2009 – Europe Preview

This is F1 Digest 2009 – Europe Preview.

It's been a long time, hasn't it? But we're back now with what probably won't be an exciting race. We'll make the best of it though.

Vital Statistics

The European Grand Prix takes place around the Valencia Street Circuit on the 23rd August 2009. The race is 57 laps, with each covering 5.4 kilometres. The lap record is held by Felipe Massa who completed a 1:38.708 last year. Qualifying saw Massa on pole as well, with 1:38.989. The long range weather forecast has sunshine throughout the weekend, with maybe just a few clouds on Saturday. Maximum temperatures seem to be around the 30 degrees C mark.

2008 in 30 Seconds

Last year saw the inaugural race at Valencia, as the European Grand Prix moved from its German home. Felipe Massa dominated the weekend, starting from pole, and easily taking the win along with the fastest lap of the race. Lewis Hamilton and Robert Kubica joined him on the podium. Um, yea, that's about it. Alonso retired on the first lap, in front of his home crowd and it didn't take long for them to walk out. Sutil and Raikkonen also retired. Now I'm really struggling. Is the 30 seconds up yet? Phew.

Team by Team

McLaren are feeling very positive about the upturn in their performance this season. Following on from their win in Hungary, both drivers are hoping to keep the pace up and maybe manage back-to-back victories. Of Valencia, Hamilton says: "It's a very demanding circuit, the kind of place that punishes any mistakes hard. It's quite tight and relatively slow, so it should suit our package." Kovalainen isn't quite so sure it will be their strongest circuit, he says: "I'm really looking forward to the European Grand Prix which, while it won't suit us as strongly as the Hungaroring, should be another strong opportunity for us to score some more points."

Over at Williams, Rosberg is looking forward to Valencia, the place rather than the track, he says: "Valencia is a cool city. The Spanish are really enthusiastic about Formula 1, so the atmosphere is usually buzzing. The paddock is in the harbour, right next to the sea, so it's a little bit like Monaco, maybe not quite as glamorous, but a really nice location for a Grand Prix." Nakajima spent his summer break preparing for the race the best way he can: "As I wasn't allowed in the factory due to the enforced shutdown (which was very strange for me as I basically spend all my time there between races...) I kept up my training as cockpit temperatures tipped 60 degrees C in Valencia last year and I don't want any distractions this weekend."

Both BMW drivers must be disappointed with their team's decision to quit Formula 1, but neither of them mention it in their preview quotes. Kubica says he likes the character of this track a lot, but notes that the hot conditions are troublesome for the car's cooling. Heidfeld says he is looking forward to testing out the modifications to the car, and hoping to find a restaurant that he really liked last year.

For Force India, the team are feeling relaxed and hopeful about the second half of the season. Sutil says: "I feel very refreshed now and I am looking forward to getting going again. As nice as it is to have four weeks off, I really want to get back in the car. We were going well before the break and I can't wait to get started again." Fisichella is also looking further ahead, saying: "There are some good opportunities coming up in the second part of the year and



some tracks I really like and have gone well on. There's my home race at Monza, Singapore and Suzuka, which have been good races for us, and then Interlagos where I got my first win."

Glock is determined that this year will be better than his last race around the streets. That won't be hard, as he recalls: "I really enjoy street circuits and I generally perform very well on them. Valencia was tricky last year for me because I had a bad cold and it was a real challenge just to finish the race, so I didn't enjoy the weekend as much as I could have." Meanwhile Trulli isn't making any predictions just yet: "We were in the top six last year in Valencia and that is my target this season. It was good to have both cars in the points in Hungary. The Valencia track has a different character so it's difficult to predict at this stage, but my target is to score as many points as possible."

For Brawn GP, Button is preparing for a tough weekend, saying: "It's quite challenging for the drivers with so many turns and the added factor of being surrounded by barriers means you have to maintain your concentration. There's been a lot of work going on at the factory following our shutdown and with the cars at the front being so close at the moment, it will be an interesting weekend." Barrichello gives us more of an insight to the circuit itself: "The first part of the lap is quick with the long pit straight followed by a curved right-hander before the slower section leading up to the bridge over the marina, and then you're down onto another curved straight. The second half of the lap feels more like a street circuit as you head away from the water and the third long straight ends with a tight hairpin at Turn 17 which is the best overtaking opportunity."

It's all change at Renault, with Piquet no longer driving for the team, and new boy Romain Grosjean stepping in to take the wheel. He thinks being reserve driver will help him, saying: "I've got to know everybody and seen how the team works. Attending all the meetings and debriefs during the last six months will certainly help me make the most of this opportunity." Meanwhile, Alonso is keeping things positive: "Our performance in Hungary was encouraging as the car was quick and we managed to get pole, which was actually a bit of a surprise. To retire from the race was disappointing, but I'm looking on the bright side because I think that the car can be just as competitive in Valencia." Is he forgetting that he was ridiculously light fuelled?

Finally Ferrari – as Red Bull and Toro Rosso are keeping very quiet ahead of this weekend's race. There's been a lot of Ferrari in the news of late, and whilst Kimi hasn't made many headlines, Massa and his replacement has. For the record, Massa is doing much better, home in Brazil recovering. He wants to be back in the car for the Brazilian Grand Prix, which is at the end of October, but he knows he can't rush it and it's all in the doctors hands. So, Michael Schumacher was almost going to replace him but is also injured, and now it falls to Badoer. Ahead of his race weekend, Badoer says: "I have a good impression and it's obvious that there's a difficult task waiting for me at Valencia. The first race will help me to get back into the rhythm of a Formula 1 weekend. I haven't set myself any goals, just to end the race."

That's all for this Digest preview. If you are near a computer during any of the Free Practice action on Friday, why not join us in the comments? Just visit Sidepodcast.com to find plenty of talk about what is going on. I will be back with a round up of all the action on Friday.