



F1 Digest – Bahrain GP

Intro

This is the fourth edition of F1 Digest for the Bahrain race weekend. So far we have covered all the Free Practice sessions and qualifying, building up to today's race. Now we'll run through all the main events.

The Race

All the anticipation building up before the race began focused on who would get to the first corner ahead – Kubica or Massa. It almost looked as though Massa wasn't even going to make it to the grid though, as he appeared very late, just before the 15 minute warning. Apparently it was a problem with his earplugs.

The track temperature was at 39 degrees C, but the wind had picked up somewhat and was causing a little bit of consternation. Nevertheless, they were away on their installation lap and then the race proper began. Hamilton had a nightmare off the line, losing seven places and watching cars fly past him. At the front, Massa was ahead of Kubica before the BMW even got going. In the live comment thread on Sidepodcast.com, Lou said: "Wow, Lewis 10th! Not something I thought I would see. Kubica just tucked behind Massa- just a publicity stunt then."

Through the first few corners, the cars were four and five abreast, making the most of the super wide run off areas. Most drove really well and got through safely, except for Sutil who collided with Vettel. At the end of the first lap, Vettel had been hit again and had to retire, whilst Button and Sutil had dived into the pits. Button was reporting a puncture. There was oil on the track which made the second lap a danger zone. Hamilton was following Alonso, desperate to get past, and as they rounded a corner, the Renault didn't seem to pull away. Hamilton bashed straight into the back of Alonso, losing his front wing. He made it back to the pitlane, albeit using the entire track and more, but this bumped him right down to the back of the order.

StevenintheUK gave us his thoughts on the incident: "Alonso didn't brake test Lewis, Alonso just didn't accelerate coming out of the corner." Steven Roy said: "The FIA can check the ECU and find out what he did."

Meanwhile, at the front, Raikkonen got past Kubica to make it a Ferrari 1-2, whilst Massa began to pull away. Coulthard dived into the pits, also reporting a puncture. Over the next few laps, things began to settle down. Kubica was all over the back of Raikkonen, clearly lighter but unable to get past. The front few drivers traded fastest laps and it was only 8 times around the track before Sutil was lapped.

Kubica was the first to break for a planned pit stop, but he ran wide on his out lap losing plenty of time to the Ferrari's. Button and Coulthard were enjoying a scrap for 19th, that is until they collided. Button lost his front wing and had to visit the pits yet again. He was only out for another lap before deciding to call it a day, his race over.

Ryan commented on Sidepodcast.com: "Wow! Button and DC just got together and *the Red Bull didn't explode into a million pieces...*" Felipe Leite also noticed: "And at the moment, except for Vettel (OUT) and Sutil, the four last at the race are the four british drivers: Davidson, Hamilton, Coulthard and Button. Who would guess that this would happen?"

Hamilton overtook both Super Aguri drivers, but struggled to hold Sato off for his position. It looked like the McLaren had suffered more damage than the obvious and Hamilton was having a tough afternoon. A few laps later, he's struggling to get past Fisichella in the Force India.



The second round of pit stops left the order unchanged at the front. Piquet retired with a technical issue. The final third of the race was not the most exciting racing we've ever seen. The Ferrari guys seemed to turn down their engines and there was a moment when it looked like Kubica could catch them up, but they picked the pace up again before he had a chance. Scott noted on the live comment thread: "Is it me or is this race turning out into one of those processions we see from time to time. I don't know about anyone else but I haven't really been excited by this race so far."

When the chequered flag appeared, it was for Massa, followed by Raikkonen, Kubica, Heidfeld, Kovalainen, Trulli, Webber and Rosberg.

Championship

Although finally getting his championship campaign off to a good start, Massa doesn't feature in the top 5 drivers. Raikkonen overtakes Hamilton for the lead with 19 points, Heidfeld also jumping the Brit with 16. Hamilton, Kubica and Kovalainen all hold 14 points.

For the first time ever, BMW-Sauber lead the World Championship with 30 points, Ferrari are next with 29 and close behind them McLaren on 28. Quite a big gap to next-placed Williams on 10 points and Toyota round out the top 5 with 8.

Conclusions

Hamilton is seriously disappointed after a frustrating race today, feeling like he has let the team down. In the post-race press release he said: "The whole weekend has not been ideal starting with the accident on Friday, but I will keep my chin up and bounce back at the next race. I messed up at the start as I didn't hit the switch early enough and therefore had not engaged the correct engine setting, and the anti stall kicked in. I lost a lot of places but things were still salvageable at that point. Then I had the incident with Fernando. I was behind him, and I moved to the right, and he moved to the right and that was it - a racing incident I guess."

Kubica remains happy that he was on the podium, despite losing the pole position before he had the chance to do anything with it. He said he had severe wheelspin at the start and then hit some debris on the second lap. Heidfeld was legitimately happy with his result, after struggling for the majority of the weekend and ending today in fourth place. Mario Theissen praised both his drivers and mentioned the fact that BMW have now enjoyed three podiums in as many races.

Regarding their incident halfway through the race, Button seems to be blaming Coulthard, whilst Coulthard refers to it as just "an incident." Button said that he started the manoeuvre on Coulthard from way back because he saw that the Red Bull was struggling, but by the time he got there, and despite seeing him, Coulthard had closed the door. As ever, Ross Brawn is simply happy that the team are showing signs of progress, despite the fact that incidents seem to be halting their actual championship position.

Regarding Massa's response to the pressure put on him this weekend, team principal Stefano Domenicali said: "It's normal when you don't have any points that you feel frustrated, because you want to show what is your performance, your standard. But what we said is... we need to stay cool and calm. I think that it was important for him, for sure, but it was important for the team to have this 18-point race. It would be nice to see both drivers on the first step of the podium but that's impossible so I think from the team's point of view, it was really a great response."

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