



F1 Digest 2009 – Europe GP

This is F1 Digest 2009 – Europe GP.

Last year's race was nothing to write home about but this year could turn it all around. Would it though?

The Race

Ahead of the race, the air temperature was at 31 degrees C, and the track up to 47, the humidity was up to 56%. A clean getaway, the McLaren's got away easily, Button fell backwards, down to 8th, and Raikkonen was up to 4th. Button tried to get past Alonso but couldn't make it work, and almost lost a place to Webber behind him.

Grosjean and Glock both came into the pits, after an apparent collision during the first few corners. Buemi also came into the pits for a change of front wing. Hamilton was stretching out a small lead, but Barrichello was holding everyone up with his heavy fuel load in 3rd.

Webber was heard on the team radio complaining that Button in front of him shouldn't be there, because he had cut the chicane and needed to give the place back. It looked like Button and another car were already ahead of him, though, and then cut the chicane. Moments later, Button moved over and let Webber through to 8th place.

Grosjean slid off track, not quite spinning, but almost. He managed to control it and kept on going. Hamilton was still scampering away at the front, almost six seconds ahead of Kovalainen, and rapidly catching Buemi at the back of the pack, after only ten laps. After just four more, the Toro Rosso was lapped, and the field continued to spread.

Hamilton was the first man to come in for his scheduled pit stop, with Vettel and Kubica coming in on the same lap. Hamilton rejoined in sixth, just behind Alonso. Kovalainen was in on the next lap, which allowed Barrichello through to push for a couple of laps. Alonso was also in and Vettel returned to the pitlane again, looked as though no fuel had gone into the car on the previous stop.

Barrichello came in for his stop, and managed to jump Kovalainen, so his next target was Hamilton. Sutil and Heidfeld came into the pits together, and Sutil managed to get out not only in front of the BMW but in front of Button as well.

A puff of smoke emerged from the back of Vettel's car, and he coasted to a stop at the side of the track, and was pulled out of the way.

Hamilton seemed to be struggling a little on his tyres, and was told over the radio to take it easy. Barrichello seemed to be catching him but then either Barrichello slowed a little or Hamilton got his tyres under control, as the gap started widening again.

Badoer and Grosjean came in to the pits at the same time, and chaos ensued. It looked like Ferrari let Badoer out too soon and into the path of the Renault. Badoer seemed to pull over to let him past, and as he was offline, he just put one tyre over the white line on the way out. He received a drive through penalty for his trouble.

Barrichello was told over the radio to halve the gap between him and race leader Hamilton, and he did his best, but Hamilton was responding well. Badoer spun it, but continued on. Hamilton came in earlier than expected, perhaps even earlier than the crew expected as the tyres were not ready. The stop took a loooong time. Hamilton came out behind Rosberg, down in 5th.



Kovalainen pitted on the next lap, and came out in 6th. Nakajima had a massive puncture, his tyre shredded, leaving debris on the track. He made his way slowly back to the pitlane. Barrichello had to come in to the pitlane, in case of a safety car, and came out in front of Hamilton.

17 laps to the finish, and McLaren were on the radio to Hamilton saying he could catch up before the end. Meanwhile, Button was chasing down Webber, but came into the pits before he could make any serious attempt. Webber, Rosberg and Heidfeld all came into the pits, whilst out on track Buemi had a quick spin. Brake dust sprayed from the tyres, and the Toro Rosso had to stop just off the track. Yellow flags were waved. Webber emerged from the pitlane behind Button, compounding a miserable day for Red Bull.

It's about this time I noticed that Raikkonen had managed to jump Kovalainen, apparently by putting in a lot of personal bests whilst the McLaren pitted. Button put in the fastest lap of the race so far on lap 46, whilst Hamilton was slowly catching Barrichello towards the front.

Glock came into the pits, a very short stop, and slightly odd with just 8 laps to go. Quite randomly, the Toyota driver kept putting in fastest sectors, and put in the fastest lap with just two laps to go. Nakajima pitted before the final lap, but all eyes were on Rubens Barrichello as he took his first win since 2004.

Results

Barrichello took the win in style, with Hamilton and Raikkonen joining him on the podium. Kovalainen was 4th, Rosberg 5th, and Alonso, Button and Kubica picked up the rest of the points. Webber was 9th, Sutil 10th and Heidfeld finished where he started in 11th. Fisichella was up to 12th, with Trulli, Glock and Grosjean behind. Alguersuari and Badoer were the last two finishers, and Nakajima, Buemi and Vettel retired.

Championship Standings

Jenson Button continues to keep adding to his championship lead, but the others are catching him fast. He now has 72 points and Barrichello has jumped up to 54. Webber has 51.5 and Vettel has 47. Rosberg rounds out the top five with 29.5.

In the constructor's championship, Brawn have pulled away from Red Bull again, now 126 points to their 98.5. Ferrari have 46, McLaren have 41, and Toyota remain on 38.5.

Team by Team

Let's start with Toro Rosso and Alguersuari found his second race even harder than the first. He said: "This was much tougher for me than Hungary because of the heat and humidity. With ten laps remaining, I had a problem with my drinks system which meant I couldn't get anything to drink. It was really tough..." Meanwhile, Buemi's race was over on the first lap after his tangle with Glock. He says: "I carried on pushing to see what lap times I could do and what the car was capable of, but I soon had braking problems and eventually the disc broke and I had to park the car."

Renault had a mixed day with Alonso up in 6th and Grosjean down in 15th. The rookie says although his first lap didn't go well, he's taking the positives from the weekend and chalking it up to experience. Alonso says: "It was a very tough race, first of all because of the heat but also because it was a very competitive race and I had to push all the way, constantly fighting to keep my position."

Kubica picked up one point, he says: "Unfortunately I was not able to make up positions at the start, and I even lost a place to Nick. But then during the race my pace was good. Although my stints were shorter, I was even able to



overtake Mark Webber during his final pit stop, which was very good.” Heidfeld is disappointed by his 11th place, and attributes it to being stuck behind heavier cars.

Over at McLaren, Hamilton is glad to be on the podium for the second race in a row but when asked if he was disappointed, added: “Yes, I think we all are, but that’s simply an indication of just how hard everyone in this team is pushing to win. We’re never satisfied unless we’re winning.” Kovalainen simply said: “To start second and finish fourth isn’t idea. But I’m more pleased with my overall performance in this race than in Hungary.” Is it enough to impress the bosses though?

Glock is mulling over the ‘what ifs’: “I was hit from behind and basically any hope I had of getting a decent position was finished there and then. But I pushed as hard as possible for the rest of the race to at least get some more data and showed what might have been by setting the fastest lap right at the end.” Trulli had grip issues and says he did his best but couldn’t improve on 13th place.

Ferrari had a day of complete opposites, with one guy on the podium and the other... not so much. Badoer finished 18th and continues to assert that this weekend was a test for him. He’s looking forward to going to Spa as he’s got some mileage under his belt and he knows that track. Meanwhile, Kimi says: “At this point in the season, if we manage to get everything right, then we can aim for the podium, and if anything was to happen to those ahead of us, we can try and do even better.”

Rosberg finished 5th, picked up some decent points, but didn’t have a very good day, he says: “I did enjoy the race but the heat really took most of the fun out of it. It wasn’t nice, but it was still a good result for the team.” Nakajima also struggled today: “I was in 13th when I had the puncture and that really finished my race. Just a few laps before the end, I then had some kind of problem so I had to stop early.” Nice and specific there.

For Red Bull, Vettel knows he’s in a tough position following his DNF. “In terms of the Championship, I will fight until the last breath, but it’s not good to have retired when you’re hunting and want to get more points than your opponent. You’re in a position to do it, but then you don’t finish the race.” Webber is also pretty downbeat, saying: “No gains for us today, which is the first time in a long time. The long and short of it was that I wasn’t quick enough today – it was a tough race.”

Force India had a relatively successful day, Sutil says: “Today was a good performance with no mistakes, good lap times and we showed a clear step forward. I think tenth was the maximum we could do from 12th on the grid.” Fisichella finished in that 12th position and is also feeling hopeful: “We made a few positions and now seem to be ahead of Toyota and some other cars. We need another step like we made this weekend and we can easily score points.”

Finally, Brawn GP won again, but this time it was someone else on the top step. Button says: “Rubens did a great job this weekend and he deserves the victory. It’s been a long time so I’m happy for him although of course I would rather be on top of the podium.” Barrichello says: “What a fantastic day. I am so delighted with the win after what was a really tough race out there. It’s just amazing and a weekend that I will never forget.”

Quote of the Day

That’s all for this race weekend, but we’re back next week with the Belgian Grand Prix. Until then, here’s a quote from Martin Whitmarsh of McLaren: “We decided to take the risk because we knew Rubens had the strategy to win and it was our only chance of attempting to prevent that. We don’t like not winning, but second and fourth isn’t such a terrible result. Now, though, we’ll focus on the challenge of Spa – a very different type of racetrack from Valencia.”