



F1 Digest 2009 – Belgium GP

This is F1 Digest 2009 – Belgium GP.

After the awesome qualifying session, the race would have a lot to live up to. Listen on to find out how it went down.

The Race

Ahead of the race, things were warmer than they had been previously, and although it was a bit cloudy, there was no rain expected. The track temperature was up to 32 degrees C and the air at 17. Luca Badoer had changed his gearbox which would mean a five place grid drop but as he was already last, it made no difference.

Most of the drivers started on the harder tyre, but Fisichella, Barrichello and Kubica were on the softs. It was a slow outlap, and then the lights were out and they were off.

Barrichello didn't move off the grid, the cars streamed past him as the anti-stall kicked in. Alonso looked like he came into contact with Sutil at the first corner. The Force India wobbled a little, but continued on. Raikkonen ran really wide at the first corner. Fisichella retained his lead, but Kimi was on a charge up to second. Having run wide and missed the corner though, we wondered whether he would have to give those places back?

That was soon out of our minds, as a few corners on, Grosjean hit Button from behind. The Brawn car spun and hit the tyre barrier, Hamilton tried to avoid him and was clouted on the other side by Alguersuari. All four of them were out of the race.

Trulli, Barrichello and Sutil all came into the pits as the safety car came out. Notably, Badoer put in the fastest lap! Still behind the safety car, though. It came in on lap 3, and just a couple of corners later, Kimi was past Fisichella easily. Vettel passed Rosberg for 7th, and Barrichello managed to overtake Trulli at the back. His next target was Badoer in 13th, which was easy.

Sutil got past Badoer, running a bit wide, another questionable overtake. Trulli was now the only guy left behind the Ferrari and told over the radio to get past, but Trulli said Badoer was too fast on the straights. Sutil was making further progress, overtaking Nakajima for 13th.

Kubica and Glock came in for their pitstops at the same time. Glock had a problem with the fuel hose in his stop, and came out way down the order. A few minutes later, Raikkonen, Fisichella, Webber and Heidfeld were all in at the same time as well. Webber was let out into the side of Heidfeld, it didn't look like they actually touched, and Heidfeld had to slow up. Out on track, though, it didn't take long for Nick to get past. Barrichello was next, running round the outside of Webber in a brilliant overtaking move. Webber was then in the clutches of Sutil, who started hounding him for the place as well. The stewards issued a drive through penalty for Mark though, for unsafe release in the pit lane.

Vettel was leading, but took his pitstop next, leaving Rosberg in the lead, who hadn't stopped yet. Raikkonen was still the effective leader. Having served his penalty, Webber returned to the track and immediately got past Nakajima. The stewards also announced they would be investigating the first lap crash after the race.

Trulli came into the pits, returned to the track, but was soon back in again, his race over. Alonso's pit stop didn't go much better, as the front left wheel faring caused problems. After a replay it looked like there was damage to the



wheel from the first corner incident. The Renault left the track in 4th, and returned in 14th. He returned to the pitlane again, another driver retiring early.

Raikkonen and Fisichella pitted at the same time and came out in the same order, Kimi ahead, leading the race. Fisichella closed right up, and was chasing him round many of the corners. Webber pitted from 6th and returned to the track in 9th, behind Rosberg. Vettel was leading, having not come in for his final stop, but he was in on the next lap. He came out in 3rd, ahead of Kubica, and set off charging after the first two.

With just two laps to go, Barrichello's engine started streaming smoke. He was told on the radio to back off and try and nurse it home, they thought it was just an oil leak. Kimi crossed the line to take the chequered flag and the win, and Barrichello did manage to make it to the finish, although the Brawn car caught fire as it made it's way back.

Results

Raikkonen took his first win this year, leading Fisichella by just 9 tenths of a second across the line. They were joined on the podium by Vettel. Kubica was 4th, with Heidfeld, Kovalainen, Barrichello and Rosberg picking up the rest of the points.

Webber finished just outside of the points, Glock was 10th, then Sutil, Buemi, Nakajima and Badoer. The non-classified drivers were Alonso, Trulli, Button, Grosjean, Hamilton and Alguersuari.

Championship Standings

Button keeps the lead on the drivers championship despite failing to complete a lap today. He has 72 points and Barrichello in second has 56. Vettel has overtaken Webber again with 53 to the Australian's 51.5. Raikkonen rounds out the top five with 34.

In the constructors championship, Brawn have 128 points, with Red Bull behind on 104.5. Ferrari have 56, McLaren 44 and Toyota 38.5.

Team by Team

McLaren had one DNF and one car finish 6th, so a mixed day for them. Kovalainen says: "Even though our overall pace here hasn't been as good as in the two previous races, our strategy worked out perfectly and I was able to overtake a lot of the guys stopping before me." Hamilton, though, is not impressed: "Some days, when things go bad they go bad – and this was just one of those days."

Button was also out early, like Hamilton and says: "It's frustrating as I was in a reasonably position having made up some places and with a lot of fuel on board but it's better to have my first retirement here where I haven't been so competitive than when I'm running at the front." Barrichello thinks he could have done better but it was over from the beginning: "I have to be happy with seventh place and the two points really after such an eventful race. We should have had far more from today but the problem with the clutch at the start took away any chance of a podium which is frustrating for me and the team."

Vettel retook third place in the championship today, so he's happy with what he achieved, adding: "It was a pleasure to drive the car and we were quicker than the guys in front." Webber finished up 9th and says: "I was released in front of Nick which I was given a drive through penalty for. After that it was a case of damage limitation. I tried to get back into the points and when we had free air, which was not often, we had good pace, but it wasn't enough."

Over at Toyota, it was a bad day. Trulli retired and explains what happened: "At the first corner I was right behind Heidfeld and at the exit I expected him to pull away faster than he did. I'm not sure if he had a problem but I just



touched him slightly and that broke the front wing. It was vibrating a lot so I had no choice but to make a pit stop. There was nothing I could do after that and in the end the team saw a problem with brake wear and decided it was safer to stop." Glock had an issue in the pits with the fuel rig and the team are determined to analyse it and stop it happening again.

Fisichella is happy with second and says it is a dream, but does admit: "I am a little disappointed as I felt we could have won the race. I was unlucky with the safety car when Kimi came past me at the restart and overtook me with the KERS. Actually behind him I was quicker but with the KERS I couldn't get past as it was impossible to be quick on the long straight." Sutil is also disappointed as his first lap incident meant it was very difficult to bring the car home. He is happy for the team as a whole though.

Over at Williams, Rosberg is satisfied with his day's work and thinks they got the maximum out of the car they could, it's just that they aren't suited to this kind of track. Nakajima is happy to put this race out of his mind: "On balance, the race was slightly better than Saturday, but of course all our attention will now be on what we can do to be sure of an improved result in Italy in two weeks time."

Renault suffered a double DNF in Belgium, and interestingly, Grosjean doesn't think he was at fault on the first lap incident. "I made a very good start, moving up to thirteenth place and I was keeping a good pace but then Button took me out at turn five and it was the end for me." I don't know how the car in front can take you out, but there you go. Alonso is simply looking ahead to Monza in two weeks to wipe out the disappointment of today.

Alguersuari avoids the Grosjean way of placing the blame and says of the incident with Lewis: "At Turn 2, Jenson spun and Hamilton had to move to the left to avoid him, moving onto the part of the track that I was on. We collided and my car was too damaged for me to continue." Buemi had a better day though: "I drove a consistent race, making no mistakes, and everything on the car worked well. It's a shame I could not pass Kovalainen, even though I was quicker than him, but at least I tried."

Kubica is realistic about their improved performance and says they will have to look into what has suddenly made them more competitive, but he also mentions: "The result means a lot of points for the team and it's good." Heidfeld isn't quite so impressed though: "Although it is a good result for the team, I have to admit I'm disappointed. From third on the grid I had higher expectations, but I lost the race on the first lap."

Finally, Ferrari are back on form. Well, one half of the team anyway. Badoer says: "Today I did my best. Unfortunately, at the first corner after the start, I flat-spotted the front tyres and so I always had strong vibrations throughout the first stint." He does say things improved once he bolted on fresh tyres, though. Kimi won the race and says: "A great victory for me and the team. The champagne tastes the same wherever you are on the podium, but the feeling when you win is definitely different."

Quote of the Day

That's it for today, and this race weekend. We'll be back in two weeks time when our attention turns to the Italian Grand Prix. For now, I'll leave you with this quote from Ferrari's Stefano Domenicali: "We are very happy with this win, which is a reward for all the hard work that the entire team has done during such a difficult and at the same time, dramatic season."