



## F1 Digest 2009 – Italy Preview

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After a crazy weekend in Belgium, and yet more driver changes, it's time to head to Monza.

### Vital Statistics

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The Italian Grand Prix gets underway on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2009, at Monza. The track is 5.8km long, and we'll see 53 laps, making a total race distance of 307km. The lap record is held by Rubens Barrichello who posted a 1:21.046 back in 2004. Last year, pole position was Sebastian Vettel with a 1:37.555, but it was Raikkonen who took the fastest lap of the race, with a 1:28.047. The long range weather forecast shows some sunshine for Friday, but it soon descends into rain across Saturday and Sunday.

### 2008 in 30 Seconds

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Last year's race was all about Vettel as he became the youngest driver to score a pole position, and he went on to be the youngest to win a race as well. It was a wet weekend, with championship leader Hamilton qualifying 15<sup>th</sup>, and nearest challenger Massa starting 6<sup>th</sup>. The race started under the safety car for just two laps, and with changeable conditions, tyres were of super importance. Massa finished where he started, Hamilton hiked all the way up to finish 7<sup>th</sup>, whilst Vettel took the win to be joined on the podium by Kovalainen and Kubica.

### Team by Team

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Let's start with Toyota, and Trulli who is looking forward to the upcoming weekend: "It is always a great occasion for me to be racing in front of the Italian fans and I really love the atmosphere at Monza. Of course, this is a home race for me so I have a lot of supporters in the grandstands and I really enjoy competing in front of such passionate fans." Glock is hoping to wash out the bad vibes from 2008: "Monza is all about speed but my memories of the track are of the rain last year because the whole weekend was wet. We got it right in qualifying and looked really strong for the race, but the conditions changed at the worst possible time so we missed the podium."

Although Renault have an impending FIA hearing hanging over their heads, their attention needs to be firmly fixed on this weekend. Alonso says: "I always look forward, try to stay positive and will approach the rest of the season believing that we can finish the year strongly. At least we know that we have a car that is fast enough to get close to the podium, which will be my aim this weekend in Monza." Grosjean has simple goals: "My aim is to do better than I did in Spa so I need to make it through to at least Q2, get a good grid position and finish the race."

Rosberg isn't sure how well Williams are going to fare this weekend: "In terms of our prospects, of course the drag levels are similar to Spa and we had a tough time there, so there is a bit of a question mark..." Nakajima adds: "It's a track that stands out all on its own, exciting and challenging to drive..."

For McLaren, Hamilton is ruing at least one of the regulation changes this year: "Since we no longer test at Monza before the Italian Grand Prix, it will take the drivers a bit of acclimatisation to get used to running in low downforce at this high-speed circuit." Meanwhile, Kovalainen thinks it will be good: "We'll also have the benefit of using KERS along the straights, which should give us a greater advantage over a single lap, especially in qualifying, where it will be extremely valuable. It should be fun!"

Over at BMW, Heidfeld agrees that the KERS cars really will have an advantage here, but he still thinks they might be able to do well. Kubica adds: "Traditionally our cars are quite quick on low downforce tracks and our performance



was already good at Spa. I have a good feeling for Monza and I am looking forward to the race as I expect a lot of Italian fans to show up there.”

Button has been looking at the track in detail, and says: “Ascari is probably my favourite part of the track but also Parabolica where the challenge is to brake as late as possible, particularly in qualifying when you’re on a quick lap.” Barrichello has good memories of the track: “There’s something very special about Monza and I have always loved racing there throughout my career. The setting in the park, the sound of the Tifosi, the speed of the circuit and the memories from my victories with Ferrari in 2002 and 2004 all make Monza one of the most exciting races of the year.”

Red Bull have been talking up their chances, suggesting that they need to treat every single Grand Prix as if it is a World Cup Final. Webber says: “We have got to focus on ourselves and do the best job we can. We can’t control Brawn’s performances or Force India or whoever’s turned it up this week. It’s up to us to get the most out of our package...”

Alguersuari is another one thinking about how to improve his performance, and says: “At the moment, I’m still very much in a development phase, coming into F1 at a time when there is no testing. Step by step, I’m getting there and every time I get in the car, I learn more, improve my understanding and go faster.” Teammate Buemi is feeling a bit more positive, though: “We are really close to the points. We just need to get a little bit better to jump towards the front of the field. If you start close to the front you can have a good race...”

Finally, we have the big switcheroo to deal with. Fisichella has been given the call up to Ferrari, which means that Liuzzi has stepped up to drive for Force India. He said: “This is a good opportunity for me to show what I can do. It will be really important for me to show a good performance.” Meanwhile, Mallya doesn’t think that the Spa performance was a one off, he says: “We know that the car is quick, blindingly quick, I would say. The sector times show it and I think the Monza track will suit us.”

Over to Fisichella and he is looking forward to the challenge: “At a time when I had abandoned my Ferrari dream, I find myself being a member of the team and their race driver for the grand prix at Monza... It will be an incredible weekend, with lots of pressure, but it’s pressure that will give me a push forward.” Raikkonen, meanwhile, is holding up the fort for the team through it’s endless changes, but he isn’t hoping for too much: “I’ll give my best to gain as many points as possible in the remaining GPs. It won’t be easy, because the other teams will show up with further developments, while we froze the F60, concentrating on the project for 2010.”

That’s all for this episode of F1 Digest. I hope you can join us for the live commenting sessions on Sidepodcast.com, we’ll be there for both Free Practice sessions on Friday, and I’ll be back with another digest to round up all the action.