



## F1 Digest 2009 – Italy Qualifying

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Welcome to F1 Digest 2009 – Italy Qualifying.

The possibility of rain for the qualifying session, meant things were just that bit more interesting today.

### Free Practice 3

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Ahead of FP3, the track temperature was at 31 degrees C, and the air at 25. It was warm, if a little cloudy, and the humidity was rising as the weekend wore on. It had rained overnight, so the track was very green.

Liuzzi headed out first but the entire pack followed him out for an installation lap. Fisichella was the first to head out for an actual lap time though, after about 12 minutes, the Ferrari followed out by Alguersuari. On his outlap, Nakajima ran wide across the kerbs, cutting a bit of a corner.

Raikkonen jumped up to take the fastest time, as the rest of the drivers headed out on track. Just Webber and Alonso remained in the garage. The Renault headed out, but Webber still hadn't emerged with half the session gone.

Hamilton and Kovalainen staked their claim on the top, with Lewis ahead, but Glock split the momentary McLaren 1-2. Fisichella was suddenly in the barriers, seemingly taking too much speed into the corner, and heading straight across the gravel. He was out of the car, and it was recovered. Most of the cars returned to the pitlane whilst the yellow flags were out, and it was Glock who returned to action first. Fisichella headed to the medical centre, just a precaution, as he seemed fine.

Webber also headed out for his first lap, his initial laptime saw him last but he continued on and improved up to 17<sup>th</sup>. With twenty minutes to go, everyone was out on track bar Alguersuari, and Fisichella obviously. The Toro Rosso had a gearbox issue that they were looking into, so it didn't look like he would be back out on track this session.

At the top, Sutil topped Hamilton to take P1, and he was on the harder tyres. Further back, Grosjean ran wide, bouncing over the gravel and the grass. Naturally, he returned to the pits.

Just ten minutes to go, and Trulli was the only guy out on track, everyone else was back in the garage, preparing for a last minute run. Sutil was heard on the radio saying he was quite happy with his car, and didn't want to make any changes. You don't hear that very often! He went out again and improved on his own fast time, but then Button jumped him, and Sutil took it back again.

### Results

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Sutil finished the morning on top with a 1:23.336, followed by Button, then Heidfeld and Barrichello. Hamilton finished up 5<sup>th</sup>, with Kovalainen, Liuzzi and Alonso behind. Glock was 9<sup>th</sup> with Kubica 10<sup>th</sup>. Grosjean, Raikkonen and Trulli were next, then Nakajima, the first to fall a second off Sutil's pace.

Buemi was 15<sup>th</sup>, followed by Rosberg, Webber and Vettel. Alguersuari and Fisichella were last, completing just 10 laps each.

### Qualifying

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The temperatures ahead of qualifying had gone up only slightly, with the air at 27 degrees C and the track at 40. Not content with raising the kerbs at the chicanes, the FIA issued a document to teams declaring that any chicane-cutting would result in times being deleted in qualifying, or drive through penalties in the race. They aren't messing around.



Also, Alguersuari had a changed gearbox, which meant wherever he qualified, he would be docked five places. And the Ferrari mechanics were rushing to finish off repairing Fisichella's car to the very last minute. He and Raikkonen were the first to head out on track once the lights went green.

Most of the field headed out for a first lap, with Hamilton, Alonso and Vettel the last to leave the garage. Raikkonen was the first benchmark, but it didn't take long for Sutil to jump up to second. He looked as though he would improve even more the next time round, but didn't, as Barrichello and Raikkonen both jumped him, the Brawn car ahead. Button slipped into second, pushed down by Heidfeld, and then Raikkonen was top again.

Hamilton still hadn't come out of the garage, but emerged with 12 minutes to go. After a couple of laps, he was up to P1, the times dropping quickly. Webber ran wide, bumping over the gravel, and returned to the pitlane. With five minutes to go, he was in the bottom five, along with two Toyotas and two Toro Rossos. Glock managed to jump up to 12<sup>th</sup>, whilst Trulli couldn't improve on his 17<sup>th</sup> place.

Three minutes to go, every single driver was out on track. Hamilton exited the pits straight into the path of Buemi, who was desperately trying to get out of the bottom five. Hamilton was in the way when they got to the corner, and Buemi had to run straight across the chicane. His lap was ruined. Rosberg was down in 17<sup>th</sup> and Grosjean also needed to improve, as Webber jumped up to 11<sup>th</sup>. The Renault plus Trulli pulled out of the bottom five, but that knocked Glock back down again, and he pitted, knowing it was already over.

The fastest three at the end of the session were Raikkonen, Hamilton and Button, and we lost Glock, Nakajima, Rosberg, Buemi and Alguersuari.

The second session got underway with everyone out straight away, Button setting the first time, and the benchmark. Heidfeld came to a stop just off track, it looked like an engine problem. He was in 12<sup>th</sup> when he stopped, but his session was over. Just a few minutes later, Kubica was on the radio saying he had an engine problem, he was told to stop straight away, so he pulled off track. That's both BMWs out of qualifying early.

Fisichella was still last, despite two drivers no longer completing laps. Liuzzi and Grosjean were also in the bottom five. Liuzzi completely nailed it, jumping up to 5<sup>th</sup> behind his teammate. No one else could improve though, which meant the fastest three were Button, Hamilton, Barrichello. Dropping out were Trulli, Grosjean, Kubica, Fisichella and Heidfeld.

The final ten minutes for pole, then, and Raikkonen was out first, all by himself for a good thirty seconds. Hamilton joined him, and the two of them were the only guys with a laptime with five minutes gone.

Hamilton posted the fastest time, as the entire field hit the track. With everyone's first laptimes on the board, it was still Hamilton ahead, with Raikkonen and Sutil close behind. Sutil jumped up to provisional pole but Hamilton was flying and took pole position by two tenths of a second.

## Results

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Hamilton on pole then, with a 1:24.066. Sutil missed out and starts second, with Raikkonen and Kovalainen behind. Barrichello and Button were just two hundredths apart, Rubens ahead, with Liuzzi a further hundredth down from Jenson. Then Alonso, Vettel and Webber rounded out the top ten.

The rest of the grid lines up as Trulli, Grosjean, Kubica, Fisichella and Heidfeld, then Glock, Nakajima, Rosberg, Buemi and Alguersuari.

## Fuel Loads

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Hamilton and Sutil went very light for pole, whilst Kovalainen and the two Brawns are much heavier – Barrichello the heaviest of the top ten. Liuzzi is also in a good position, having a car capable of second on the grid like Sutil, but with much more fuel on board.

Outside the top ten, Trulli and Glock are fuelled to the moon, whilst Fisichella has the least fuel of the second half of the grid. He is the most out of place driver, it seems.

### Team by Team

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Brawn GP appear to have seen a resurgence in form for this weekend, and Barrichello says starting from 5<sup>th</sup> is a tactical thing: “That was probably one of my best qualifying laps at Monza and I really enjoyed myself out there. We had the ability to be on pole today but strategically we had to consider the pace of the KERS cars off the line and so we put a lot of fuel in the car and focused on what was right for our race.” Button is also impressed with his session: “I’m really happy with sixth position today. Rubens and I have been so close on lap times all weekend and he’s ended up just fifteen-hundredths ahead of me which is the difference between getting your head down on the straights.”

Another team having a good day is Force India, and Liuzzi is counting his lucky stars: “Two weeks ago I didn’t expect to be on the grid so this is a fantastic result – better than we expected. The team made a great effort and gave me a lot of support to reach this target.” Sutil starts second, and is happy to be next to Hamilton: “I’m starting on the front row with Lewis for the first time since F3 and I’m really happy he is next to me. He’s a good friend but we will fight hard for it.”

Now to the opposite end of the spectrum, BMW had the same failure on both their engines. Kubica says: “This is a very difficult situation for me, not only for this Grand Prix but also for the next races. I do not have many engines left.” Meanwhile, Heidfeld is disappointed as he felt they were competitive here. “I was certainly expecting a good qualifying result after the car was quite quick here. Reliability problems are very exceptional for our team and, of course, it is very strange that Robert and I both had problems with two new engines within a few minutes.”

Alguersuari says his problems started with Free Practice first thing: “I was not expecting much from this session, after problems in the morning with my gearbox meant I only did ten laps in free practice. Because of that, I did not have the time to try much in terms of setting up the car.” The situation between Buemi and Hamilton was looked into but nothing came of it. Buemi also defends himself against other claims: “As for Glock saying I held him up, I don’t think I did, as I was just trying to rebuild a gap after being slowed by Hamilton.”

Nakajima and Rosberg qualified 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> respectively, which isn’t ideal. Kazuki says: “It was a tough qualifying session for us – we knew it would be, but that doesn’t change the disappointment.” He blames traffic a little for not being able to get through to Q2. Rosberg adds that he thought they were starting to find some pace during qualifying, but he couldn’t put a great lap together in the end.

Over at Red Bull, the guys tell it how it is, Vettel says: “Not a very good session for us today, ninth and tenth is not where we wanted to be, but let’s wait to see the fuel weights. It’s a long race tomorrow, anything can happen and our target is to score points.” Webber explains: “I’m pretty happy with the job I did today and the guys have done a good job all weekend, but we’re just lacking a bit of pace.”

Fisichella says he was a bit tense before qualifying today as he lacked confidence in the car, and he says: “Overall, I am reasonably happy, even if I’m aware that a 14<sup>th</sup> place on the grid is not up to the Ferrari standard. Yesterday, I drove the F60 for the first time and this morning, because of a mistake by me, I lose valuable time to prepare for qualifying, as I crashed into the barriers. I want to thank all the mechanics who did a fantastic job of rebuilding the car for qualifying.” Kimi, though, is very happy: “That was one of my best qualifying sessions of the year and we hope that tomorrow things can go even better. I am pleased with this result, for the team and for our fans.”



For Toyota, Trulli is happy with his lap but not with his starting position of 11<sup>th</sup>, but he's hoping that he can get into the points tomorrow. Meanwhile, Glock says: "We looked quite promising this morning but we didn't transfer all of that speed to qualifying, and I wasn't helped by traffic." Presumably, by traffic then, he means Buemi.

Grosjean is looking forward to the race: "This is my best performance in qualifying so far. Of course, I would have preferred to make it through to Q3, but I think I can be happy with my performance today. For tomorrow, the KERS should help us at the start of the race." Alonso adds: "We had a few doubts about reaching Q3 this morning so we are happy to have made it through. In the end we missed being in fourth or fifth position by a very small amount."

Finally, we turn our attention to McLaren and Kovalainen starts fourth: "Pole position would have been better but I'm happy with my position. Tomorrow, we'll see what strategies everybody is running: "I think we're going to be strong." Hamilton is fired up for tomorrow: "We didn't anticipate being this quick before the weekend, but I'm in the best position to make the most out of the start and to get out of the first corner cleanly. It's fantastic to have Adrian starting alongside me tomorrow and we both want a clean start and to enjoy the grand prix."

### Quote of the Day

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That's all for F1 Digest today. I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to seeing how the strategies play out tomorrow. I hope you can join us on sidepodcast.com as we watch the race and try to figure it all out. I'll leave you with this quote from Giorgio Ascanelli, which I love for its sheer simplicity. He is clearly not impressed with Toro Rosso taking the last two grid slots: "Today, we ended up where we deserved to be."

