



F1 Digest 2009 – Italy GP

This is F1 Digest 2009 – Italy GP.

The potential rain looked as though it would leave the racing alone, meaning we could focus on the action.

The Race

The track temperature on Sunday was at 38 degrees C, and the air at 26 degrees. Alguersuari had taken a five place grid penalty from last on the grid, so the team made the decision to start him from the pitlane.

It was a clean start, but Raikkonen got past Sutil, and Barrichello past Kovalainen. Kubica tapped Webber just a couple of corners in, and that knocked Webber off into the gravel. He was out of the car instantly, and the safety car was poised to come out, but it didn't need to. Liuzzi overtook Kovalainen, and Alonso got past Vettel to close up to Kovi. Kubica passed Vettel, despite having one side of the front wing hanging off, from his incident with Webber.

The other BMW, Heidfeld, got past Fisichella, which meant he was chasing after Vettel as well. Kovalainen was overtaken by Alonso.

Rosberg pitted on lap 4, just for a change of tyres, so it looks like he had a puncture. A couple of laps later, the black and orange flag was shown for Kubica, so he headed straight to the pitlane for a new front wing.

Grosjean was told over the radio that he needed to watch what gears he was using, as they were worried about the gearbox. He was down in 17th. Hamilton flew past Rosberg, lapping him as though the Williams was parked. He posted the fastest lap of the race so far, several laps running, and then came into the pits at the end of lap 14. He came out ahead of Liuzzi in 5th.

Kubica and Rosberg came into the pits again, the BMW was pushed into the garage – his race over. Rosberg had another tyre change and came out again, just as Sutil took his first pit stop. He came in earlier than expected and had a really quick stop, emerging ahead of Kovalainen in 6th. Kovi looked like he could get past, with added KERS, of course, but he couldn't make it stick.

Raikkonen pitted from the lead, bolted on the soft tyre, and came out behind Liuzzi. Alguersuari pitted but was pushed into the garage – yet another retiree. Next up was Liuzzi, who pulled off track with a complete loss of power.

Alonso was the first of the one-stoppers to come in for a stop, which went smoothly. Barrichello put in the fastest lap of the race, as he and Button tried to pull out a gap to Hamilton in third. Button took his stop on lap 28, and came out in clear air. Barrichello was in next lap, and came out with half the main straight clear ahead of his teammate.

Hamilton was now leading again, with 15 seconds over Barrichello back in 4th. He needed to get at least ten more seconds before his next stop, but had nowhere near enough time. Both Brawn cars got past as Lewis took his stop.

Raikkonen and Sutil came in for their final stop at the same time, and emerged in the same order, because the Ferrari did have some kind of problem in the pit stop, but the Force India came in too fast and the mechanics were in disarray trying to avoid being knocked over. He also knocked off the right wing mirror as well.



Vettel, down in ninth, ran really wide, way out across the gravel, but kept it pointed in the right direction and regained the track. With just five laps to go, Nakajima and Trulli both braked late into the chicane, they touched, which slowed Trulli down into the path of his teammate. Glock came up to overtake him, they were side by side through a few corners. Trulli tried to get past round the outside, and slipped off into the gravel, losing a couple of places.

With just one lap to go, Hamilton hit the kerbs which spun him round, off into the barriers. The Safety Car was called, just as Barrichello crossed the line to take the win. Sutil was right up behind Raikkonen, but with the Safety Car called, he couldn't overtake.

Results

Barrichello took his second race of the year, just under three seconds ahead of Button. Raikkonen joined the Brawn pair on the podium, with Sutil close behind him. Alonso was 5th, Kovalainen 6th, and Heidfeld and Vettel picked up the final available points.

Just missing out, Fisichella finished 9ths, with Nakajima and Glock behind him. Hamilton finishes 12th, despite being in the wall, and behind him was Buemi, who also retired on the last lap. Trulli and Grosjean both finished one lap down, with Rosberg two laps down. The retirees were Liuzzi, Alguersuari, Kubica and Webber.

Championship Standings

Brawn have made a strong step forward in their championship battles, and it seems as though the only question is on which driver can take the drivers title. Button has 80 points, with Barrichello on 66. Vettel and Webber have 54 and 51.5 respectively, so they're not out of it yet, but it's looking unlikely they can close the gap. Raikkonen rounds out the top five with 40 points.

For the constructors, Brawn have about a 40 point lead over Red Bull – 146 to 105.5 – that's massive. Ferrari then have 62, McLaren on 47 and Toyota on 38.5.

Team by Team

Red Bull must know that the championship is slipping away from them, as Vettel picked up just one point and Webber suffered a DNF. Of the first few corners, the Australian says: "I had Sebastian in front, so I was pretty clean as I didn't want to get tangled up with him. Both of us got through the first chicane, I was following Sebastian into the next, but then had a racing incident with Robert Kubica. It seems like his front wheel was inside my rear left at the second chicane, it was difficult to know he was there." Vettel didn't fare much better, although he did at least finish, he says: "Overall, we didn't have the speed and perhaps this wasn't the best track for our car. For the next race we will put more downforce in again and maybe we'll be better, we will see."

Heidfeld felt like he had a productive day, even if the results don't look great: "I'm totally happy, as for me it was a great race. Coming seventh may not sound fantastic, but from 15th on the grid that really was the best I could do today." Kubica retired and explains: "I ended up with a damaged front wing, but am not sure how this happened as it could have been with my fight with Mark or I could have hit a kerb. However, I was able to continue and managed to overtake Sebastian Vettel, despite having the front wing problem. For safety reasons we had to change the wing a couple of laps later. Finally an oil leak forced me to retire."

The Toro Rosso boys had vastly different days, Buemi felt he did okay: "Starting from the back, the race is never easy, but I feel my lap times were good and consistent, especially in the second stint, so I am reasonably happy." Alguersuari says: "I started from the pits, so at least I kept out of the trouble on the opening lap. After that my race was going okay and I was up behind Buemi. But then I had a gearbox problem which caused my retirement."

McLaren also had a DNF with Hamilton's last lap off, but he says it was just because he was trying too hard: "It's unfortunate – but these things happen, it's a racing incident. I was pushing incredibly hard on that lap to try to get close to Jenson and use KERS to pass him, then I exited the first Lesmo and the back-end got away from me and I went backwards into the wall." Kovalainen also had a disappointing day, citing a difficult start and a lack of grip.

For Renault, Alonso was actually disappointed in his KERS at the start of the GP, but the rest seemed to work out okay: "In the race I had good pace, the car behaved perfectly and our strategy worked well. Finishing in fifth position is a good result, but the objective for the rest of the season is a podium or even a victory." Grosjean finished 15th and says: "My start was very poor and I need to try and understand why. I had some contact in the first chicane and so the car was damaged for the rest of my race, which made things difficult and impossible to score any points."

Toyota had a quiet afternoon until Trulli's moment at the end with Nakajima – it seems as though he was having a good time though: "Towards the end I was getting a bit bored to be honest and I tried really hard to find an opportunity. As soon as I saw a little space I just dived in and braked very late. The move was almost okay but there wasn't quite enough space and unfortunately I hit the kerb and then I had a bit of a fight with Timo. That was good fun and I enjoyed it." Glock also enjoyed it: "We had a nice battle and made sure we kept it clean. In the end I was on the inside so I won the fight."

Rosberg has a list of complaints about the entire weekend, but during the race, he was hit by some debris, changed tyres in case of a puncture, had no grip, and basically had a difficult afternoon. Nakajima has a different opinion though: "The race pace wasn't enough but we managed to have a good couple of laps and I think it was positive to keep Glock behind me even though he was going longer than me. I think we need to find more speed from the car but Singapore should be a good race for us."

Sutil started 2nd and finished 4th but he is pretty happy with that: "It was a great race and the car was performing really well. At the start we knew it would be really difficult to defend our position against Kimi and his KERS button and then I was stuck behind him the whole race. I was really quick but I just couldn't find a way past him as the KERS had such a big effect on the circuit." Liuzzi explains what caused his DNF: "I had an unusual problem, the transmission started making a strange noise and then I lost drive and couldn't push. That's racing it was just a shame as we didn't have a reliability problem until now, but that's how it is. We won't give up though until the end of the season, we want to get lots of points and I am sure we will make it."

Raikkonen finished up on the podium, but knows a lot of it was down to luck. He says: "I got a great start and I almost managed to also get past Hamilton, but even if I'd managed it, the result would have been the same in the end. I'm disappointed I couldn't fight for the win, but we did not have enough speed." Fisichella had a tough first weekend but isn't letting it get him down: "In the first part of the race, I felt comfortable on the softer tyre, while I struggled a bit more on the harder one, especially after the pit stop. It's a shame I only just missed out on a points finish, but this afternoon, I did the best I could."

Finally, Brawn GP and Button says: "I had a really good race today and it's a fantastic feeling to be up on the podium again. The team and Rubens did a great job this weekend and congratulations to Rubens for his second win of the season. The car worked very well all weekend and the balance was good throughout the race which meant I could set consistently quick lap times when it really mattered." And our race winner: "Monza has always been a great track for me and it feels just wonderful to win here again. We made some great decisions this weekend and the work that we achieved on Friday was the key to setting up the result today. We had to think strategically in qualifying because of the KERS cars and our one-stop strategy really paid off."

Quote of the Day



That's all for this race weekend. Next time we'll be in Singapore for the second annual night race. I wonder what the streets will have in store for us. In the meantime, I'll leave you with this quote from Fabrice Lom who is Renault track support for Red Bull: "It's going to be very difficult in both titles for us, but we won't give up – we still have four races in which we can fight."

sidepodcast.com
YOUR WEEKLY F1 FIX