



F1 Digest 2009 – Brazil GP

Welcome to F1 Digest - Brazil GP.

After months of dragging it out, Button finally secured his first driver's title. Here's how he did it.

The Race

Race day dawned with the track temperature at 34 degrees C and the air at 27. The rain held off, although there were forecasts it would arrive before the end of the race. Liuzzi had taken a five place drop for changing his gearbox, meaning he was last. That promoted Vettel to start right behind Button.

On the outlap, Vettel was told on the radio that his engine was hot already, so he needed to keep an eye on it. The first few corners were clean except Raikkonen who drove into the back of Webber. Further back, Vettel tapped Kovalainen, which spun him round and into the path of Fisichella. Trulli and Sutil had a collision, spinning one each side of the track. Alonso got caught up in that, being hit by the Force India as it spun away. Trulli was out of the car and ran over to Sutil, they were having a proper argument as they headed towards their lift back to the pits.

Outside his garage, Kovalainen pulled away from his stop with half the fuel hose hanging off. He sprayed fuel all over Raikkonen, who was heading towards the exit from his own stop. There was a flash fire on the Ferrari which was out as soon as it started, but must have shaken Raikkonen a little.

The safety car came out allowing us time to take stock. Button had made up places to 9th and Vettel to 11th. Barrichello was still leading, with Webber and Rosberg behind him. Confirmed as retired Sutil, Trulli and Alonso.

The safety car came in on lap 5, and Barrichello backed the cars right up for the restart. Kubica overtook Rosberg for third easily, whilst Button was hustling Grosjean for eighth. After a couple of corners of great driving, Button got past and made it stick. Vettel also got past Grosjean as the Renault went wide. Button was on a proper charge and overtook Nakajima just a few corners later. Vettel also tried the same move but couldn't make it, whilst Button seemed to get stuck behind Kobayashi.

Things settled down a little, and Race Control announced that car 2, Kovalainen, was under investigation for the pit lane incident. The Trulli/Sutil collision was also to be investigated after the race.

Heidfeld was the first to pit for his scheduled stop, but all eyes were on Button, who had closed up behind the Toyota of Kobayashi. The other Brawn car came in to the pits, as Barrichello took his first stop, and it was nice and clean. He came out in front of Vettel in 9th, but Vettel didn't stand for that and overtook him easily.

Heidfeld pulled to a stop at the side of the track, his fuel rig didn't work so he had run out. Barrichello was busy defending himself from Hamilton. Button did get past Kobayashi for a moment, but outbraked himself allowing the Toyota back through again. He was on the radio complaining that Kobayashi was moving around in the braking zone and the team said they would get onto Charlie Whiting, but before that could happen, Button was through, finally! Kubica came into the pits and was out in front of Barrichello. Webber also emerged in front of Barrichello. Button pitted and came back out in 11th.

Rosberg pulled into his garage and retired, with an apparent gearbox problem. The other Williams came flying sideways across the track and into the tyre barriers with a massive smash. He was missing a front wing before he got



there, and on the replay we saw him fly into the back of Kobayashi coming out of the pits. Nakajima was out of the car and seemed okay, whilst the marshals cleared it under yellow flags.

Barrichello was on the radio asking what was wrong with his car, and was told it's just because he was heavy. He was busily defending a much lighter Hamilton. Button overtook Buemi, and the pair almost touched, but Jenson got away with it.

Things really calmed down then, with drivers heading towards their second stops. Webber was still leading, with Barrichello behind and Kubica third with Button in 4th. Barrichello pitted and rejoined in 6th, just behind Vettel. Webber had enough time to come in and rejoin in the lead. Button's stop saw him out behind Kovalainen, and Vettel managed to leapfrog Button by miles. Button was still in a championship winning position, and when Kovalainen in front of him pitted, he had a bit of a safety net. He was helped even more when Hamilton overtook Barrichello for third, slightly damaging his front wing endplate, which fell off, but didn't cause any trouble.

Barrichello was not so lucky and picked up a puncture and had to pit again, returning to the track in 8th place. Further back, Kobayashi dived past Fisichella for 10th place, but all eyes were on Button. There was talk of a few drops of rain, but it didn't seem to affect the running at all and Webber took the chequered flag.

Results

Webber took the win then, albeit overshadowed by the championship victories. Kubica and Hamilton joined him on the podium. Vettel finished 4th, just ahead of Button, with Raikkonen, Buemi and Barrichello picking up the rest of the points.

Kovalainen just missed out in 9th, with Kobayashi, Fisichella and Liuzzi behind him. Grosjean and Alguersuari were next, but one lap down.

The retirees were Nakajima, Rosberg, Heidfeld, Sutil, Trulli and Alonso.

Championship Standings

Button finally did it then, with one race still to go, he has secured the championship with 89 points. Vettel has jumped Barrichello for second, 74 to 72, so that battle is still on. Webber is behind on 61.5 and Hamilton has jumped Raikkonen to squeeze into the top five on 49 points.

Brawn also secured the constructors title, leading with 161 points to Red Bull's 135.5. McLaren have moved to third ahead of Ferrari 71 to 70, whilst Toyota round out the top five with 54.5 points.

Team by Team

Today we'll start with McLaren and Hamilton returned to the podium. He says: "It was an incredible race for me and I'm so happy. Starting at the back was a completely different feeling from last year. This time, I wasn't involved in the championship outcome, but I'm incredibly happy for Jenson. I've been down to congratulate him, his team and his family." Kovalainen also feels quite positive despite problems: "While the results don't show it, I had a good race out there today. I lost about six or seven laps' worth of fuel with the incident with the fuel-hose. And, without that problem, my first stint would have been longer and would have allowed me to get ahead of some of the cars ahead of me."

Raikkonen was on the receiving end of that pit stop incident and says: "What happened on the first lap ruined my race. First I was hit at the first corner, then when trying to pass Webber, I was hit and lost the front wing. At the pit stop, I ended up with some drops of petrol in my eye, from the fuel line stuck on Kovalainen's car and then I was



engulfed in flames and blinded: I was going to stop, but luckily the flames soon went out. Even now, my eyes are still burning, but I'm alright." Fisichella also found Heikki to be a bit of a problem: "Obviously, starting from the back row, my race was already compromised. Then there was also the incident with Kovalainen, who spun in front of me, forcing me onto the grass, which prevented me from trying to make up a few places in the fight on the opening lap."

Over at Toyota, Trulli is still fuming about the incident with Sutil: "He was on the inside so I took the outside line but he kept pushing me wider and wider. In the end I was on the grass and had no control of the car so I crashed into the wall at high speed. I think there was enough space for both of us to get around the corner." Kobayashi adjusted his goals through the race: "Physically it felt like a really long race and it was quite tough. My first target was to finish the race and I am pleased to achieve that, but after the start I was in a decent position to score points so I am a little disappointed I didn't."

At Toro Rosso, Buemi also thinks he could have achieved more: "My start was difficult, as I was sandwiched between Kubica and Rosberg at the first corner, so they got past me, which was a shame. However, we did not have a particularly strong race pace, so we must look at the data to try and understand why. I have mixed feelings because after our performance on Friday I had hoped to finish in the top five, so although the points are nice, it's not as good as I expected." Alguersuari simply says he was stuck in traffic for the first half of the race, but he still feels he's learning and improving all the time.

Alonso thinks they could have done well today, but it wasn't to be: "It was a very busy first lap and unfortunately I got caught up in it. I made a good start and we had a promising strategy for the race, but unfortunately when Sutil and Trulli collided I was hit by the Force India as well." Grosjean bemoans a lack of grip, which meant he couldn't push as hard as he would have liked.

Williams suffered a double DNF with Nakajima saying he was having a good race until the accident, so he is disappointed. Rosberg adds: "I was lying in third, but then Kubica overtook me at the restart when the safety car went in. Fourth was still ok though because we had a strong strategy and competitive pace. It was therefore looking good until the gearbox problem. After a promising weekend, this result is a shame."

From a double DNF to double champions, it's fair to say Brawn had a good weekend. Barrichello says: "Whilst I am obviously disappointed with the result today, I have to be pleased with our year at Brawn GP. We really have a great car and a great team and it has truly been an amazing year when you consider the situation that we were in just before the start of the season. I'm truly pleased for Jenson as a friend and he is a great champion." Button says today was the best race he's ever driven and continues: "This season has been a rollercoaster ride from the elation of the wins at the start to the hard graft in the second half of the season which has seen us grind out the results needed to take the titles."

For BMW, Kubica finished on the podium and attributes a lot of it to qualifying: "The basis for today's result was laid yesterday when we decided to take a gamble and drive the wet qualifying with a low-downforce set-up. This went well in Q1, but was difficult in Q3. Although some people were disappointed with eighth place yesterday, I was quite pleased. Today we had a good and consistent pace." Heidfeld retired and did notice there was a problem before he stopped: "I wondered how quick the car was and soon I received the call to save fuel and to save more fuel, but it was too late. I ran dry in turn 8. At least it is good that the team has something to be happy about today."

The other half of the Sutil/Trulli battle blames the Toyota driver: "Trulli was there on the outside trying to go round. It was a really stupid manoeuvre as there was no space and I couldn't see him at all. At that point it wasn't worth it and it ended my race far too early on as I went over into the gravel. Jarno was furious and said it was my mistake but I just told him what had happened to me. But it's over and now he's just got to deal with it." There is no love lost there, is there? Meanwhile, Liuzzi says: "At the end I had a brake problem, which compromised the race but at least



we finished this difficult Grand Prix, which was important. We had hoped for rain as we seemed to be very competitive in those conditions but that's how it is - now we can just look forward to Abu Dhabi."

Finally, Red Bull won the race, and Vettel is reasonably pleased with his 4th place: "I think there is a guy at Brawn who is happier than me today. All in all it was a good race – starting from the back and finishing fourth. We were helped by some people crashing, but I think fourth was the maximum we could do today. Without the problems in yesterday's qualifying, we could have won the race, but we didn't so there's not much more to say." Webber has his moment of glory: "I was a little bit panicky in the second stint as Robert started closing, although my pace was not too bad and I knew he was quite short in the middle stint. I was then able to control the gap to Robert and he backed off towards the end, which gave me a nice run home. It's fantastic feeling to win again. As a team we've had quite a few victories this year off the back of some tough seasons, but today has confirmed second place for us in the Constructors' Championship."

Quote of the Day

That's all for F1 Digest this weekend. We have just one more race to go now, at the brand new Abu Dhabi circuit, so I will be back with a preview before the weekend gets underway. I'll leave you with this quote from Norbert Haug of Mercedes: "I would like to say sorry to Rubens and Sebastian who today needed to give up their fierce plans of winning the world championship – but I am sure both of them see, like all of us, in Jenson Button a worthy successor to Lewis Hamilton as F1 world champion."

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