



## F1 Digest 2009 – Abu Dhabi GP

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Welcome to F1 Digest - Abu Dhabi GP.

The last race of the season looked like it would be a walk in the park for McLaren - let's find out.

### The Race

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The track temperature ahead of the race was 34 degrees C, with the air just slightly lower on 31. It was a generally clean getaway, Lewis was flying off the line and kept his lead easily. Trulli was battling Kubica, who managed to get ahead. Kovalainen was up to 13th, whilst Raikkonen had lost a place to Kobayashi.

Barrichello began falling backwards with a damaged front wing, as it appeared he touched with Webber at the first corner. On the replays, we saw a bit of debris fly off Barrichello's car and it actually got stuck for a moment on Button's chassis behind, but it wasn't there for long.

Hamilton didn't appear to be pulling out too much of a lead, with Vettel just under a second behind him. Button was desperate to get past Webber, also about a second behind.

Things were pretty quiet, with the drivers holding their positions. After 11 laps, Hamilton ran wide off track, and regained still in the lead, but it allowed Vettel to catch him right up.

Barrichello was the first driver to pit on lap 16, followed in by Kubica. Rubens didn't change his front wing as we thought he might have, and he came out in 10th. Hamilton and Button came in on the next lap, as out on track, Kovalainen was making a pass on Raikkonen and made it stick.

When Button emerged from the pit lane, he was out in front of Kobayashi. The Toyota driver had a go around several corners, and eventually outbraked Button to get in front. Meanwhile, when Vettel came in for his stop, he managed to jump Hamilton for the lead. Just a lap later, Hamilton headed back to the garage and they couldn't continue racing.

As all that was happening, Alguersuari came to halt out on track, and it looked as though he had made a mistake in the pitlane - pulling into the Red Bull box instead. He didn't stop there, missed his own garage, and broke down out on track. Bizarre.

About halfway through the race, Fisichella was given a drive through penalty for speeding in the pitlane. Sutil managed to pass Grosjean who messed up one of the corners.

On lap 42, Vettel came in for his second stop, returning in the lead, as Button took his stop as well. Kubica tried to get past Buemi, but spun it, meaning he didn't take the place and he lost one to Rosberg as well.

With just under ten laps to go, Button started to catch up to Webber. The Red Bull made a small mistake, and Button closed up to just a second behind him. It was all about them for the last few laps, Button kept on closing up, and they were side by side through a few corners. Button tried his best but it wasn't to be.

### Results

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Vettel won the race, although for the second week in a row it was an overshadowed victory. Webber was second and Button was third, and after those last few laps, the attention was all on them.



Barrichello finished 4th, with Heidfeld, Kobayashi, Trulli and Buemi picking up the rest of the points.

Rosberg just missed out with Kubica behind him, followed by Kovalainen and Raikkonen, Nakajima and Alonso. Liuzzi was 15th, whilst Fisichella, Sutil and Grosjean were a lap down. Hamilton and Alguersuari were the only two retirees.

### Championship Standings

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Naturally, Button is still the title winner, but Vettel secured second in the drivers championship with 84 points, and Barrichello third with 77. Webber had 69.5, whilst Hamilton rounded out the top five with 49 points.

Brawn GP ended the year with 172 points with Red Bull on 153.5, McLaren had 71 with Ferrari just behind on 70, and Toyota finished up with 59.5.

### Team by Team

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Let's start today with a team who completed their final race in Formula 1 - in their current iteration anyway - BMW. Heidfeld says: "I am very happy with my fifth place. It was a good race in which I was able to get the maximum out of the car and score four points, which was enough to reach our target for the end of the season to overtake Williams in the constructors' Championship." He also goes on to say that he got a little emotional towards the end of the race and had to pull himself together and keep concentrating. Meanwhile, Kubica said: "I lost the race in the second stint when the car was very slow, while in the first stint I was able to go at quite a good pace, similar to Rubens. The car was working very well. After changing tyres I had no grip at all."

Over at Toro Rosso, Alguersuari tries to explain away his pit lane incident: "I had to stop with a gearbox problem as a couple of gears were disabled, so I decided to pit. But there was a misunderstanding because I came into the Red Bull Racing pit next door as my team was not expecting me." Hmm. Buemi had a better day, though, picking up one point. He said: "I lost a bit of time behind Nakajima, but overall I think I did the best I could and it was a great race. My fight with Robert was quite fair, as I think I left him enough space."

Ferrari didn't have a particularly special weekend, despite the presence of the massive Ferrari World building and presumably therefore some Ferrari fans. Raikkonen ended up 11th and says: "We knew we did not have a car that was competitive here. It was definitely not a good weekend, but I don't think any of us have anything to reproach ourselves for. We did the most we could with the package we had." Fisichella says: "It was a shame about the drive-through which compromised my second stint. I am sorry that I wasn't able to contribute to the team in terms of points and to have not really shown my worth. Unfortunately, the F60 is very difficult to drive, especially in qualifying and starting from the back is always a big penalty."

For Toyota, Kobayashi had a good weekend and a great end to the year: "I certainly wasn't expecting to be racing in Formula 1 this season and I want to say thank you to Toyota for this opportunity. My target was to finish in the top six. This is a fantastic result and I am extremely happy." Trulli didn't have such a good time: "It was not an easy race for me. I made a good start and was fighting with the BMWs on the first laps, which was good fun, but I was struggling a little with traction."

Hamilton retired from the race and said: "After three or four laps, it became clear that there was a problem with my right-rear brake pad, so I couldn't open up the gap back to Sebastian and Mark. When the problem got worse, the team radioed me and told me to stop at the end of the lap. Of course, it's a shame that we couldn't show the performance we'd had throughout the weekend - but sometimes that's racing." Kovalainen didn't really show that performance either and said: "Unfortunately, the performance of my car was not as I'd have liked, and the heavy fuel load made it harder to make greater progress - but I was fighting right until the last corner."



For Force India, it wasn't a great race, and Liuzzi said: "We had a problem with the soft tyres in the first 15 laps that caused a lot of oversteer so I think it is the maximum we could have achieved." Sutil adds: "The two-stop strategy was the right one and the race went OK although we obviously didn't get any points, which was the aim. All the same it has been a very good season, naturally with a lot of ups and downs, but we've gone massively forward from the beginning of the season to the end. I think we can be very proud of this progress."

Championship winners Brawn felt the pressure was off so it was a fun weekend all round. Button said: "The last few laps were really exciting and I was giving everything to take second place from Mark. I couldn't quite make the moves stick and he's a very difficult guy to overtake but it was a good clean fight and we were really on the edge." Barrichello said: It was a competitive race throughout and a lot of fun so I have to be pleased with fourth position today. It's truly been a great season and I have to thank the team for giving me a car that has been so competitive this year and the opportunity to return to winning ways again."

Grosjean isn't happy with how his day went: "The race today was disappointing. I made a good start but I was blocked several times. I also suffered with some brake problems during the race." Alonso didn't fare much better: "The result today is disappointing as we were not able to produce the performance we wanted. I would have liked to finish the season on a high, especially as this was my last race with Renault."

Over at Williams, Rosberg finished up 9th and said: "It wasn't a terribly exciting race for me today as I just didn't have the pace to do any better. I would have liked to help the team hold on to 6th place in the Constructors' Championship. From a personal perspective, my 7th place in the driver's table wasn't challenged and I think this was a good result this year in the circumstances." Nakajima doesn't have much to say: "It wasn't easy running on a one-stop today and I didn't feel that the first stint went well. The middle of the race was more affected by traffic, but there was nothing to do except keep plugging away for 55 laps."

Finally, Red Bull made it three victories in a row, and Webber is satisfied: "Towards the end of the race, Jenson was able to close the gap to me and I thought 'this is going to be tight'! We had a good clean fight on the limit and the battle was a credit to how Jenson's driven all year." And of course, Vettel is very happy: "That was a fantastic race. We had a very good start, it wasn't good enough to overtake Lewis, but I was surprised I was so close to him... To sum up the season, what can I say? I would say up and down, we are currently very strong and have just gained our fourth one-two finish, so congratulations to the team."

### Quote of the Day

That's all for this episode of F1 Digest and of course, the last F1 Digest of the year. Don't panic though, there will be a lot happening over on Sidepodcast.com to keep you occupied, and it won't be long before I'm back with all the information from 2010. I'll leave you with this quote from Ross Brawn: "To go through the trauma of the winter months and make it to the first race and then achieve eight Grand Prix victories and the Constructors' and Drivers' Championships in our first year is an outstanding achievement."