



F1 Digest 2010 – Bahrain Preview

Hello everyone, welcome to the first race of the season, and our first official F1 Digest. We are back with a brand new series covering everything you need to know in a race weekend. If you followed the series last year, you'll notice that we're missing a Friday show, but that just makes this preview episode, the Saturday qualifying and Sunday race Digests even better. With that said, we'd better get on!

Vital Statistics

This is the Bahrain Grand Prix and the race will be on the 14th March. The track has been modified so it is now 6.3 kilometres long, which will mean 49 laps and a total race distance of 308 kilometres. The lap record is held by a certain Michael Schumacher - a 1:30.252 in 2004. Pole position in 2009 was a 1:33.431 posted by Jarno Trulli for Toyota. The long range weather forecast shows nice, sunny weather, with maximum temperatures in the 30s and humidity around 15%.

What You Guys Think

This year I've solicited opinions on each and every track on the 2010 calendar. For Bahrain, there are plenty of thoughts but if you want to get in on the fun, head on over to the wiki page: [Your Thoughts on 2010 Circuits](#). For Bahrain, Pat W said: "I was skeptical of this being the first race, but with so many teams now, perhaps it is good to start in a place with more room before subjecting Albert Park to a 24 car start." Steven Roy isn't too happy about the changes, saying: "Bahrain has produced good racing but the extension has now ruined that." Lukeh also isn't that impressed with the circuit: "It has a giant tower. That's all I can remember of Bahrain." And finally, Tom G thinks good thoughts: "Well at least it's not Yas Marina."

2009 in 30 seconds

Now for a quick reminder of what happened at Bahrain last year:

The Toyota duo qualified in the first two grid slots, with Trulli ahead of Glock. Timo passed Jarno off the grid, Hamilton made a killer start, as did Webber although he started at the back. Kubica suffered a first lap incident, whilst Button charged through. After the first round of stops, Button was in the lead and it was a simple jaunt to the finish for the Brawn driver for his third win of the year. Vettel was in second, showing off just how much he struggles to overtake.

Team Quotes

This year we have 12 teams on the grid, so you will have to forgive me for taking up a little more of your time in this section. Let's start with Ferrari, who have the fabulous pairing of Alonso and Massa. Fernando is raring to get the season started, which will be quite a theme, I think. He says: "We made a list of things before we began testing and today we checked the final item, so I think we arrive in Bahrain having done all we could have done, with the homework done. We'll see what happens." On the other side of the garage, Massa is a little more conservative ahead of the season, saying: "We never expected to have an advantage and to go to the first race and win in an easy way, definitely not. We expect to have a competitive car and this I think we have done. The car is reliable but also consistent and that is what we want to start the season."

Let's move on to one of the new teams and HRT F1 left things to the very last minute. There hasn't been much talk from Senna recently, but the newly confirmed Karun Chandhok is excited to make his big break in F1: "After chasing a seat for a long time, I finally found a great team to drive with. Colin Kolles has shown a lot of faith in me and it helps to have the backing of someone who has known me for long in a sport like Formula 1." Kolles himself has high

hopes but realistic aims: "There are always development and human issues within a team, but we are close to achieving our breakthrough in F1 and the coming season will be a massive learning curve for us working together. It would be a dream to win our first point in our first race, but we are focused on taking things one step at a time."

Now, from what may be one end of the grid to the other and Red Bull are looking to be very quick, so far anyway. Mark Webber is not going to be drawn on his chances to win the championship this year, after finishing fourth in 2009. He said: "Don't expect me to say I'll win the title this year, that would be suicidal. I aim to win more grands prix than I did last year. Let's say we have a great opportunity to do something special." Vettel is concentrating on car performance and says: "I don't think we have to fear reliability issues yet. It looks good... We have a new car, new parts, everything is a bit new and slightly different in design." He continues that although there are lots of little things changing, you get used to it very quickly. I suppose you have to if you're travelling 200 mph!

Sister team Toro Rosso has been very quiet in the run up to the season but towards the end of last month, Buemi said: "Before going to Melbourne last year I tested for only half a day with big issues on the car so I went without knowing what the car could do or what to think." This year, he's feeling a lot more prepared, and a lot more settled at the team, which can only help his confidence. Alguersuari is also feeling a lot stronger than 2009, but notes that for him, the season is going to feel very long this year!

Over at Force India, Adrian Sutil is aiming for a position in the top ten at Bahrain, and is happy with testing, saying: "The baseline car we have now after 12 days of testing looks very good and promising. The changes we have made during the winter have all had a positive effect. Testing went well and although there was a lot of rain over the period, the last two days in Barcelona were okay." Liuzzi, though, has much stronger feelings towards the car, suggesting: "In my five years of F1, this is definitely the best car I've ever driven. It's the most balanced, and knowing that has made me feel so much stronger and confident. Of course you can never know exactly where you are compared to the others but we can go to Bahrain feeling optimistic and positive."

Virgin Racing are another new team on the grid this year, and they have a new driver in the form of Lucas di Grassi. He has his sights set on modest goals: "Our main priority, of course, to finish the race. Then, with a good performance. We will be able to do so and I'm not worried at all." I'm not sure I believe him. Glock is a bit more confident, though, and believes the team's decision to design solely on CFD will be okay: "So far we haven't had any problems with it. We've had some little updates with aero parts that straight on worked, so that's a positive sign. But I think when the big steps are coming, it will be interesting to see."

Oh, it's time to see what a certain Michael Schumacher has to say ahead of his great big comeback. "It's funny to think that I will be competing in Formula 1 again when just a few months ago, I would have declined the opportunity categorically. But sometimes things change and the right circumstances come together. I feel fresher than I have for many years." He says he is in the best shape physically and is ready for the challenge. Teammate Rosberg is settling in with the team and mentions how welcoming everyone has been. He also adds: "We did have some concerns that we were not able to find the right direction to extract the maximum potential from the car but by working hard, we were able to find our way, and ended testing on a high."

Lotus have issued preview quotes but only from Mike Gascyone and Tony Fernandes. That might be because the drivers don't appear to be able to find anything positive to say. Back in February, during testing, Trulli said: "We cannot be happy about the pace, but this is what we have at the moment so we have to deal with it. We have a lot of work to do. We're short on time and everything had to be hurried up to get the car ready for testing and for Bahrain." The telling quote: "We are ready to race, but I can't say we are ready to fight." Kovalainen narrows down the problem a little: "I think the main issue is the downforce. We have not been able to develop the aero package like we should do." He's optimistic that updates will help though.



For Williams, Barrichello is really looking forward to getting back out and racing and he's super happy at his new team: "I'm delighted to be entering my eighteenth season. I'm so motivated and I'm in a much better physical condition than I have been at any other time. I'm also really happy to be driving for Williams. I've settled in well and I already feel like I've been here five years!" Hulkenberg, though, is brand new and says: "Being a Formula One driver is a great feeling and I'm very excited about going to Bahrain. I learnt a lot as the team's test driver, which has prepared me well for the season ahead. Working in the factory has also helped give me more of a technical understanding of the car, it won't make me quicker, but it will help me with set-up."

Next up, Sauber, and Pedro de la Rosa is thinking back to his last appearance in the desert: "I have good memories of Bahrain. In 2005 when I had to jump in, I scored the fastest race lap. In 2007, I was there for two days of testing. However, I think the new section which is added to the infield will make it an all new track, because it means we have to adapt the downforce level. The best aspect of the circuit is that you can overtake." Let's hope. Kobayashi also has good memories: "I won two GP2 Asia races in Bahrain in 2008 and 2009 and I have been testing there in Formula One in 2009. I like the fact the season starts on a circuit I know so well." He's quite lucky in that respect!

McLaren are creating quite a stir with their defending champion and former champion line up, but the pair of them are focusing on very individual things. Button says: "I'm really looking forward to getting into my car on Friday morning in Bahrain and knowing that I'm the world champion. It's a responsibility and an honour - but it's something I'm going to enjoy for as long as I can. I don't want to lose that number from my car!" Meanwhile, Hamilton is musing on how fast the off season went - aren't we all? - "I can't believe the winter's over already - it seems like only yesterday when I was racing in Abu Dhabi. It's been a winter of two halves for me. Before Christmas, I really focused on my fitness and training... Since January, I've been fully focused on working with the team, testing the car and improving our package ahead of the opening race of the year."

Last but not least, we've got Renault. Kubica says: "I feel as ready as I can be considering that winter testing has been so limited. I've spent a lot of time with the team and we already have a strong working relationship, which means we can make the most of the time at the track. There has been a lot for me to learn and there are still questions to answer, but we got some good information from the tests..." Finally, Petrov says: "People are asking me if I feel nervous, but I'm used to racing and I know what I need to do. Of course things are different in F1 and I'm still learning about the car and how to work with the team. But I feel good and I can't wait to go racing in Bahrain."

Predictions

And now, as part of my aim to make F1 Digest just that little bit more personal, and to live up to my New Year's Resolutions, I am going to make some predictions. I'm terrible at predictions, so be warned. I don't think Bahrain is going to be anywhere near as chaotic as the Australian GP is when it opens the season. Teams and drivers will be finding their feet though, but I'm going to suggest Lewis Hamilton for the win. Don't ask me why, and... I reserve the right to revise my opinion after I've watched qualifying.

Outtro

And there you have it! That was our first preview show of the year, and it was a fascinating one. From drivers who are already resigned to their slow car, to new drivers raring to get out on that track, we've got them all. It's going to be brilliant to watch them hit the tarmac. I will be back with all the information from Free Practice and Qualifying on Saturday - enjoy the action and I'll see you then.