



F1 Digest 2010 – Australia GP

Hello and welcome to F1 Digest. If Bahrain wasn't the start we were looking for, then Australia was everything you could want from a second race. Qualifying had hinted at the chaos we might see, but I certainly wasn't expecting it to be anywhere near as good as it was.

Race Round-Up

Virgin Racing opted to start from the pitlane, having made some tweaks to their cars overnight. As the cars were lining up on the grid, Trulli was pushed back to the pitlane as well with hydraulic issues. He never actually started the race. The rain was beginning to fall and the track was declared wet. The drivers started on intermediate tyres.

When the lights went out, Vettel made a great start to pull out a slight lead into the first corner. Massa was also up into second, which was helped when Alonso spun round, and had to sit and face the oncoming traffic, who all thankfully managed to avoid him. The replays showed that Alonso left very little room for Button around the first corner, the pair touched which put Alonso in a spin, and he collided with Schumacher at the same time. Schumi was pushed down the order along with Fernando.

Kobayashi's Sauber dropped its front wing again, which caused him to veer off into the wall, and then fly back over the track and into the gravel, taking Buemi and Hulkenberg with him. One lap down, four cars retired, and the Safety Car came out.

Schumacher had to pit for front wing damage, and the Safety Car went back in. Webber was caught napping on the restart, as Kubica almost managed to make it past the Red Bull but it didn't stick.

Button came in for dry tyres, and when he returned to the track he found it a little bit slippery. We all called it as the wrong decision - he'd taken the dry tyres too early. However, in a couple of laps, loads of drivers took the decision to pit for the exact same reason, Renault called both their drivers in on the exact same lap, and narrowly managed to avoid stacking the cars.

Button didn't need to pit, and that propelled him into second place. By this time, Senna had stopped out on track and Petrov spun off into the gravel. Sutil headed back to the pitlane and climbed from the car. Three more retirements.

There was a great scrap for the middle points positions. Hamilton, Massa, Webber and Alonso were all fighting for the same piece of track and closed right up to each other. Hamilton passed Massa, but a piece of carbon fibre went flying off as he did so. Massa appeared to be struggling with his tyres, but either way, Hamilton was up to third.

Vettel went flying off track into the gravel, retiring from the lead. He complained of a front left brake failure, and returned to the pitlane, keeping his helmet on. This promoted Button to the front of the field. Di Grassi also pitted, and it looked like he was retired. He was in the garage for ages, then he came back out 13 laps down, and then he pitted again - gearbox troubles, and his race actually was over by then. Glock pitted a few laps later, also retired from the race.

Hamilton was having a good look at Alonso in front of him, closing right up to him and attempting an overtake. It didn't work and that allowed to Webber to get close as well, and within a couple of corners, Webber had run into the back of Hamilton, knocking them into the gravel. They both continued onwards, but Hamilton was now down in 6th, Webber in 9th having pitted for a new front wing.



That allowed Button to take the chequered flag - waved by John Travolta - in relative luxury.

Results

So, JB managed to take his first win of the year, and his second Australian victory, with Kubica 12 seconds down the road, and Massa a further two. That made up the podium, and the rest of the points positions went to Alonso, Rosberg, Hamilton, Liuzzi, Barrichello, Webber and Schumacher.

There were only four other finishers, Alguersuari, de la Rosa, Kovalainen and Chandhok who made it to the end of his first Grand Prix.

The retirees - Glock, di Grassi, Vettel, Sutil, Petrov, Senna, Buemi, Hulkenberg, Kobayashi and Trulli. Phew. That's a lot.

Championship Standings

Alonso retains his lead on the drivers championship with 37 points, and Massa has 33 just behind him. Button now has 31 points with Hamilton on 23 and Rosberg on 20.

In the constructor's championship, Ferrari have 70 points which is quite a lead on second place McLaren with 54. Then Mercedes have 29, and both Red Bull and Renault are on 18.

Team Quotes

We will begin with Williams and Hulkenberg didn't manage to finish the race, or even get past the first lap. He said: "Today was obviously pretty disappointing. I was already in the corner when I was suddenly hit from behind by Kamui Kobayashi. It was quite a big impact. I'm not sure what caused it, but it's frustrating because I was looking forward to my first race here." Barrichello, meanwhile, thinks he could have been one place up: "It was a good race but we should have finished in seventh really. We took the chance to change tyres when we did and go for it. I thought everyone else would also come in, which is why I went for that route. More points for the team today is positive though."

Renault picked up some serious points today with Kubica, who says: "Second place today is a fantastic result for the team after all the hard work we have done over the winter... We know there is still a long way to go before we are really competitive with the fastest teams, but this is a brilliant boost for everybody in the team." Petrov didn't get that boost though, admitting he made a mistake: "When I was on the slicks I got caught out in the braking zone for turn three and got stuck in the gravel. I'm disappointed because I think I could have scored points today."

Virgin Racing also had DNFs with neither driver finishing the race. di Grassi stopped first saying: "Unfortunately, we didn't time the strategy well to change to slicks but otherwise things were going okay. It's a shame that we were hit by another problem - a hydraulic problem - and we had to retire after 26 laps." Those hydraulics are causing all kinds of issues at Virgin, but Glock had something different going wrong: "We had a problem just 15 laps from the end of the race when I started to feel that there was something wrong with the way the car was feeling. I came in and we found a problem which we now know to be a camber shim having worked loose, and this was causing the suspension to move around on the left rear." I have no idea what I just said.

For Mercedes, Schumacher is gracious in the wake of being the victim in an incident, saying: "I could have had a good race today so it was a pity that I was hit right after the start. That incident decided my race obviously. But things like that happen and you have to just say 'that's racing'." Rosberg had a better afternoon, although he seems to think quite a lot went wrong: "Fifth place is a good result after a mixed-up race today. I had a bad start in the wet



and after that we lacked pace and I struggled with the option tyre. The rear degradation was pretty bad so we decided to go for a second stop and get some fresh tyres to try to attack the group ahead.”

Lotus Racing had one DNF in the form of Trulli, who really didn't even start. The Italian assigns it to a hydraulic failure and can't wait to actually get racing in Malaysia. Kovalainen finished 13th and says: “I enjoyed it today, I had good fun out there... When Glock dropped I just focused on keeping up a decent rhythm, not making any mistakes and bringing the car home.” Which he did.

Another new team, Hispania Racing, got the race finish they've been longing for and it was Chandhok who finally saw the chequered flag: “This is a fantastic day for the team and a great step forward. I am proud to have ended our first race. At the start, I could see a big accident developing ahead of me and tried to keep the to the inside to avoid trouble.”

Senna had that ever-present hydraulic failure, but isn't too distraught about it, hoping that their one finish this week will turn into two cars at the end of the race in Malaysia.

Now, Ferrari had a pretty good outing, picking up 3rd and 4th place. Massa was on the podium again, and says: “The key to getting on the podium was the start. I managed not to spin the wheels, while other drivers struggled for grip and I managed to move up to second. Then I lost some places in the early stages, when I had a few problems with grip, but thanks to the strategy, I then managed to make up some.” Alonso adds: “I am pleased with this result. I got an awful start, because I had wheel spin on a white line and was last after the first corner following a collision with two other cars, so to finish fourth is very significant, especially given what happened to some other drivers.”

Over at Sauber, Kobayashi says: “It looks as if I touched a kerb or another car in turn three. Everything was very close and I don't really remember anything major, but on the data it looks like there was something. I had no worries about the front wing, but a few corners later it went off and got stuck under the car.” de la Rosa wasn't too pleased with his 12th place finish: “For a while the race went okay, I managed to stay out of trouble and there was a good chance to get our first points. But, I'm afraid, we underestimated the tyre degradation. In the end I really had no rear tyres left.”

Yet again, Sutil started the race in a good position, and ended up out of the points, whilst Liuzzi picked some up. Sutil says: “We seemed to have a problem with the engine very early on in the race. I was driving on just four cylinders and then lost the power and that was it really. It was a shame as we were looking good after the start.” Liuzzi is much happier though: “Another great race and another great result for the team. It's a confirmation of the pace we showed in Bahrain and the work the team did over the winter. We worked hard all weekend for this seventh place and it's a brilliant result at the end of what was a crazy race.”

For Toro Rosso. Alguersuari is undecided how he feels after today: “I think on the one hand I'm quite happy as I had a long fight with Michael which was nice. I was under a lot of pressure, but I was able to keep him behind me for many laps until I made a small mistake at Turn 13... That mistake might have cost me a point but we have to be happy with the progress we made this weekend...” He certainly did better than Buemi who says: “Today went really badly for me as I was involved in someone else's accident on the opening lap and I don't really know how it happened: I guess Kobayashi must have braked really late.”

Our penultimate team Red Bull had a mixed day with Webber finishing 9th, he said: “At the end of the race we caught the leading guys, but then we had the incident. I apologise to Lewis about that. I lost all downforce in the front of the car when I got close to them, the car lifted and I slid into the back of him.” Vettel had a tricky afternoon too: “I felt that something was wrong one lap earlier than I went off. I had some sparks coming up from the front left wheel; we didn't know what it was and so wanted to pit. Then a couple of corners before, I had huge vibrations



building up and as soon as I touched the brakes, I had some sort of failure going in to Turn 13 and ended up in the gravel.”

Finally, McLaren, and Hamilton seems to have calmed down after some stressed radio during the race itself: “This was probably one of the drives of my life. Okay, it’s possible that the decision to make a second tyre stop wasn’t the right one, but my team are a brilliant bunch of guys and they usually get it spot-on.” And regarding the accident, he says: “It was disappointing to be taken out by Mark Webber, but I hear he apologised for it after the race so I appreciate that.” Race winner Jenson Button says: “What a fantastic weekend! From the first lap here, I felt comfortable in the car... In these tricky conditions, I think we made some very good calls and we came away with a victory.”

My View

This race was exactly what F1 needed after the disappointing start to the season, and puts us all in a good mood for now. I’m not sure it has proven that F1 is fine, but it certainly was a great afternoon. I’m even tempted to watch the race again and I never do that. Watching drivers trying to get through the field was fabulous, seeing some of the new teams finally make it to the finish line was also good. Generally, a big thumbs up.

Initially, I predicted Button for the win, so I should have stuck with that but after qualifying I changed my mind to Alonso. He didn’t even make it to the podium, so my predictions are terrible. Maybe I’ll do better in Malaysia.

Outtro

That’s all for now. I’ll be back in a few short days as Australia and Malaysia are back to back races, and we’ll be gearing up with another F1 Digest Preview. Sidepodcast.com has all the reaction from Australia, and the build up to Malaysia so I will see you there.