



## F1 Digest 2010 – Malaysia Preview

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Hello and welcome back to F1 Digest. It seems like only a few days ago since I was here reliving the Australian GP with you. Ah, it was only a few days. Back to back racing means we are ready to preview the Malaysian GP. Let's get started.

### Vital Statistics

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The Malaysian Grand Prix takes place on the 4th April at the Sepang International Circuit. The track is a permanent facility, of 5.54 kilometres which will mean 56 laps. The record is with Juan Pablo Montoya who posted a 1:34.223 in 2004. Pole position in 2009 was Jenson Button with a 1:35.181. The previous three winners of the race have been Button, Raikkonen and Alonso. The long range weather forecasts suggest rain, rain, rain with temperatures around 32 degrees. The race will be starting later in the day, similar to last year, which could quite conceivably cause a repeat of the problems. But more of that in a moment.

### What You Guys Think

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Just a couple of thoughts on the Malaysian circuit, KerbRider says: "a decent track, a lot of fun to drive around and more technically demanding than most of Hermans other hermits." Whilst Lukeh says: "I quite like Malaysia myself. When it's not in the middle of a flood and unsure if it's day or night time, of course."

If you want to send me your thoughts on any or all of the circuits left on the calendar, please email me christine at sidepodcast dot com and you could hear your words in this very section.

### 2009 in 30 seconds

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Here is a very brief recap of what happened last year at the Malaysian GP.

Jenson Button continued to show how very dominant the Brawn car was by qualifying on pole. His teammate took a gearbox penalty, whilst Vettel was serving a penalty from the previous race. The late start time meant the GP itself started out dry enough, Button made a terrible start, and spent the next few laps chasing back his lead. The rain started to fall before half distance was reached, and there was a moment for the drivers to pick wet tyres but soon even they couldn't deal with the amount of water that was falling. After 31 laps, the FIA called a halt to the race and it never restarted. Button took the win with Heidfeld and Glock behind him.

### Team Quotes

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Let's begin with Mercedes and Rosberg is looking forward to it: "Malaysia is one of my favourite circuits on the Formula One calendar. It's fast and challenging with a nice layout and a real variation of corners which makes Sepang an exciting track to drive. I have generally qualified well there, starting from fourth on the grid last year, and third in 2006." Schumacher is also relatively happy about how things are shaping up: "I have taken a lot of positives from the race weekend in Melbourne. Whilst that might not be evident at first sight, when you look into the weekend more deeply, we did make some real improvements and have good reasons to be satisfied, just not from the actual result, obviously." Regarding Malaysia, he says they should have improved pace.

Over at Sauber, de la Rosa also counts this track as one of his favourites, saying: "It has a lot of rhythm with many flowing corners which reminds me a little bit of the Circuit de Catalunya. The track in Malaysia is physically extremely demanding, especially because of the humidity and the heat. I like driving there a lot! It's important to be fit for there, for a driver it's by far the toughest race on the championship calendar and it's also very demanding on the car." Kobayashi echoes what I think we might all be thinking: "I don't mind the heat but I hope we don't get the same



weather as during last year's Grand Prix when the race had to be stopped because of the heavy rain." Indeed. He also adds that the proximity to Japan might mean he gets to see some home fans.

Sutil also has his mind on the conditions in Malaysia: "You can lose up to four kilos over the race so fitness and concentration is absolutely key. The night after the Australian Grand Prix I flew straight to Malaysia to acclimatise, and I've also spent three days in Langkawi training, doing a lot of running, swimming, sea kayaking and so on, really just getting used to exercise in this type of condition." Meanwhile, Liuzzi has his eye on the competition: "Unfortunately, to match Red Bull, Ferrari, Mercedes and McLaren's speed is difficult for us, but the team is working really hard. For us the main competitor at the beginning seemed to be Renault, but now they've made a big step forward. I think it will be our main target to try to catch them in Malaysia to beat them in the championship."

If we turn to Renault next, then, Kubica isn't so sure they will be on top form: "I don't think it will be an ideal circuit for us, but on the other hand we discovered in Australia that the car performs better in warmer conditions and the heat in Malaysia might help us. It's a demanding track because there are lots of different corners and it's so wide that it gives you the confidence to really push and find the limits." Petrov feels he is still settling in: "F1 is such a steep learning curve, but I feel like I'm improving each time I get in the car. After two races I now have more experience and a better understanding of how to work with the team to improve the car. This is something where I will get better throughout the season because it's a big difference compared to GP2."

Over at Hispania, Chandhok feels comfortable about racing at Sepang: "I am really looking forward to my third F1 race. I have already driven a number of times in Malaysia and even won on the track with Renault V6. I was on the front row with iSport in GP2 Asia and also race there many times in Formula Asia." And Senna is hoping to finish his first GP: "I am very excited to go to Malaysia as I have driven there in GP2 so I know the track well. This will free my mind and I hope we will have a better race in terms of performance."

Button is on cloud nine after his win in Australia and is hoping for more of the same: "We're only two races in, but I think the development race will already be starting to have an influence on performance. It's the rate of improvement that will most influence the battle at the front. And I'm confident we can deliver in this area, it was something I watched the team doing throughout 2009, and it was one of the key reasons for deciding to hold talks with the team." Hamilton has to get his mind back on the racing after yet another tricky weekend in Oz: "It's a fast circuit, that requires a well-balanced car with a good level of downforce. In some ways, it's quite similar to Barcelona, where we tested well before the start of the season, so I'm optimistic that we'll be competitive this weekend." He does note that he's still a bit concerned about their qualifying pace, though.

Now, it's only been a few days since the end of the last race, and the teams have been busy travelling, so at the time of recording, I'm missing some previews. Let's see what we can find, though. Williams technical director Sam Michael has said they are expecting good things from their team, even their rookie. He says: "Nico is a fast driver. He's still finding his feet as this is only his first season in Formula 1. He's smart, and he knows what he has to do. I have 100% confidence in him delivering for the team."

Virgin Racing have many headaches, but the most important of the moment is finishing a race, swiftly followed by getting a big enough fuel tank to do so. Nick Wirth has admitted that it was Wirth Research who made the mistake, and they will be responsible for fixing: "The chassis supplier is us," he said. "Nothing to do with engine supplier or fuel supplier. What that means is that we are fixing it for the team. We are not charging the team." They're thinking it might take until the European season gets underway though.

Tony Fernandes of Lotus Racing has been discussing his five objectives for the beginning of the season, and they are as follows: gain the respect of the Chapman family and Lotus fans, get the car on the grid, finish the races, be the best of the new teams and improve a little bit in every race. They're doing pretty well so far!



Then you have Ferrari, with Alonso who thinks he could have won from the back of the field, and Red Bull, whose suppliers are having to defend themselves and say it's not their fault Vettel's car broke down in Australia. We'll finish on some inspirational thoughts from Alguersuari who talks of his battle in the last race with Michael Schumacher. "Schumacher took away a point, but without realising it he gave me much more. He taught me how to understand better the tyres. If they had been better preserved, I would have done a one-stop strategy and I'm sure I would have been able to secure the points." Maybe this time, eh?

### Predictions

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I think it has to be Vettel's turn this race. He's been on pole position twice now and it's about time he managed to turn it into a victory. I do think the rain is going to make a difference in the race, and probably not in a good way like it did in Australia. I also think this might finally be the weekend that Schumacher outperforms Rosberg.

### Outtro

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That's all for this episode of F1 Digest. We've got two more episodes to come through the Malaysian weekend, one summing up all of free practice and qualifying, and one following the race. You can live comment on all the threads over on Sidepodcast.com as well. See you there.

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