



F1 Digest – Spain GP

Intro

Welcome to the final F1 Digest for the Spanish Grand Prix weekend. We've covered all the Free Practice sessions and Qualifying leading up to today's race. Now sit back, relax and let F1 Digest take you through all the action.

The Race

There hasn't been more anticipation to a Grand Prix this year, with Alonso lining up next to Raikkonen on the grid, ready to show either how his Renault has improved or how light the car really was. The early reports during the week that it could be a wet race were completely unfounded, as it was bright and sunny and the track temperature was up to 38 degrees C.

During the installation lap, Hamilton locked up his tyres at one corner, whilst Alonso ran off into the grass in his efforts to warm up his tyres. The front runners all had a good start, though, with Raikkonen retaining his lead and Massa diving past Alonso to take second. Hamilton also gained a place and pulled up behind the Renault. Further back though, Sutil spun going round the first corner, and whilst several drivers managed to avoid him, Vettel had nowhere to go and collided with the Force India. The safety car came out whilst the two cars were cleared.

On the third lap the safety car came in, allowing Raikkonen to stretch out his lead again. Piquet ran really wide, seemingly an unforced error, but on the next lap he collided with Bourdais and wound up retiring anyway. The Toro Rosso came into the pits for a new nose, but the damage to his suspension was too much, and he climbed out of the car. Both Toro Rosso's out of the race at a very early stage. Davidson also came into the pits and retired after a quick inspection by the mechanics. It turns out a stone got into the bodywork and damaged the radiator.

Alonso pitted on lap 16, and three laps later Massa was in the pits as well – shedding a bit more light on how well the Renault did qualify. Raikkonen, Hamilton and Kubica all dived into the pits during the next couple of laps, leaving Kovalainen running at the front of the pack. At Turn 9, he suffered a wheel failure, which shredded his tyre, leaving Kovalainen a passenger as he smashed into the tyre barrier at 150 mph. The car was seriously embedded into the tyre wall. The safety car was deployed again, along with a medical car. Heidfeld had to admit defeat and pit whilst the pit lane was closed, otherwise he would have run out of fuel. He was thus handed a stop/go penalty that effectively ruined his race. On the next lap, the pit lane opened and the majority of mid-field runners came in, and three laps later the safety car joined them.

Barrichello had a bizarre accident on his way out of the pits, he ended up with his front wing broken. We didn't see what happened, but it appears to be a collision in the pits with Fisichella. Barrichello drove one lap of the circuit, trying to dislodge the wing, eventually leaving it halfway round the circuit. Obviously he had to pit for a new nose.

Kovalainen was stretchered away to the medical centre, but gave the thumbs up to the crowd as he went. John Greenup commented over on Sidepodcast.com: "SpeedTV showing Heikiki's car being towed away, appears to be massive damage to undercarriage." Whilst Ryan speculated on the cause of the incident saying: "You could actually see the bits of shrapnel from the bead section of the rim fly up over the car."

Disappointing all the fans at the circuit, Alonso pulled to a stop suffering an engine failure. Scott left a comment saying: "I guess that Renault wing didn't keep the engine cool enough?" Whilst everyone was watching Alonso, Barrichello snuck into the pits and also retired, the damage from his collision with Fisichella more serious than



previously thought. The next retiree was Rosberg, who pulled to a stop on the home straight, conveniently close to his garage. The Williams engine had blown. Richard left a comment on Sidepodcast.com: "Loved the "powered by Toyota" logo on the cover of Rosberg's smoking engine!"

During the second round of pit stops, Raikkonen retained his lead ahead of Massa and Hamilton, and it looked like little would change for the rest of the race. Scott Woodwiss commented on the live comment thread: "Hamilton definitely can't keep up with the Ferrari's, he was 7 tenths slower on the previous lap."

On lap 53, Coulthard and Glock come together, with a repeat of the situation Coulthard's been in so many times. Glock was attempting to overtake, and although this time it did look more like the Toyota's fault, Coulthard closed the door and the pair collided. The stewards announced the incident would be investigated after the race. SteveintheUK commented on the situation: "Top 4 are lapping within 0.15 of a second of each other. And DC has done it again, somebody teach him how to use his mirrors." Although Steven Roy put the blame on the other party: "That was the worst attempt at an overtake I have ever seen."

In the last few laps, the only battle on track was Coulthard vs. Sato, with the Super Aguri unable to hold the position from the faster car.

The final points positions went to: Raikkonen, Massa, Hamilton, Kubica, Webber, Button, Nakajima and Trulli.

Championship

Raikkonen retains his lead at the top of the drivers championship with 29 points, followed by Hamilton on 20. Kubica has 19 points and Massa has 18 whilst Heidfeld rounds up the top five with 16 points.

BMW have lost their constructors championship lead to Ferrari, with the Italian team on 47 to BMW's 35. McLaren are close behind on 34, with Williams on 12 and Toyota on 9.

Conclusions

The first retirees out on track today were Sutil and Vettel. It was a frustrating day for Toro Rosso as Bourdais also didn't make it to the end of the race. Franz Tost summed it up by saying: "Our races are getting shorter and shorter at the moment! Vettel stopped at Turn 4 on Lap 1, while Bourdais managed six more laps. Vettel could do nothing about it as Sutil spun right in front of him and Bourdais didn't see Piquet and they collided." Bourdais added that he checked where Piquet was and felt he was too far behind to attempt an overtaking manoeuvre and then all of a sudden they had collided. More weight to the "mirrors aren't good enough" argument.

Renault also suffered with neither of their drivers finishing the race. Piquet admits that the original mistake was his and that because he came back on track further down the field he had to take some risks. He's putting it down to a learning experience, though. Alonso, meanwhile, says the weekend was both good and bad: "I think now we should hopefully start enjoying races again and racing closer to the front. Although I am disappointed not to finish, it was a nice surprise to see that we are more competitive than we thought we would be."

Nakajima managed to keep his nose clean for the majority of the race, which allowed him to grab a couple of points in 7th place. Rosberg, however, was disappointed in his non-finish, saying that 7th could have been his if his engine hadn't given up. Sam Michael hasn't actually confirmed it was an engine failure, mind you, saying they haven't yet identified the problem and it's being investigated.

Super Aguri have had a tough weekend, and Davidson felt the brunt of that with his unexpected retirement. He mentioned that Piquet brought a lot of gravel back onto the track with him, after the Renault's excursion on to the run off area, and that was where the stone came from that ruined his race. Sato, though, thoroughly enjoyed his



race, even though it wasn't easy. He did come into contact with a couple of cars on the first lap of the race, but suffered little damage so was able to finish in 13th – although technically, that's last.

Fisichella had his best result of the season, finishing in 10th. He said: "I was pushing but I was at the limit with the grip. I enjoyed the battle with Heidfeld - he was quicker than me but I managed to keep him behind for many laps. Better than yesterday definitely but we still need to work a lot and find something more." Team boss Vijay Mallya put a positive spin on Sutil's non finish: "Keeping the car that was leading the constructors' World Championship behind us also put a big smile on my face! Unfortunately Adrian was not so lucky; he tried to move up, sadly it didn't work, but if you start close to the back you have to take risks. We now just have to work on qualifying and improve on this - if we start higher up the grid, who knows where we could go?"

McLaren are the last team to have a driver DNF. Kovalainen was airlifted to hospital for further checks but appears to have escaped with only a concussion. He's being kept in overnight, but should be fine to be released tomorrow. Ron Dennis is quietly confident that he should be okay to race in Turkey. Of the accident, Dennis said: "The precise cause or causes of his accident are not yet known. Our data shows evidence of a sudden tyre deflation shortly before the accident, but it is still too early to identify what triggered that deflation other than to say that it is likely to have been the result of a wheel rim failure." Hamilton, meanwhile, was relatively happy with his performance today, saying that from his qualifying position he was glad to have finished 3rd. He also said it was good that the competition is so close at the top, but he's looking forward to being more competitive in Turkey.

BMW had both drivers finish, although Heidfeld was slightly disappointed with his 9th position. He made up a couple of places on the start line, but the unfortunate timing of the safety car period messed up his strategy and meant he had to serve a penalty. The safety car rules have been called into question previously, as the closure of the pit lane has messed up a few races already this season, and I imagine BMW will join the chorus for a revision to the regulations.

Webber kept his nose clean and finished in 5th position after a particularly quiet race, whilst Coulthard couldn't seem to steer clear of trouble. He came into contact with both Sutil and Glock, and eventually finished in 12th. Christian Horner compared the two nicely: "It was an excellent race for Mark, well executed by both driver and team, his pace was strong all weekend and we're very pleased with fifth place. For David, the nightmare of yesterday's qualifying session continued. It looked as though he might be able to pick up a couple of points at one stage in the race, but unfortunately things just didn't go his way today, I'm sure his luck will change soon." The Glock incident was investigated by the stewards, but they decided no penalties were necessary.

Trulli seems to have suffered from the collision between Coulthard and Glock as well, as the Toyota team mistakenly called Trulli in for a pit stop, when they thought he was the one with front wing damage. Trulli maintains that this cost him a couple of extra points, as he finished in 8th. Team principal Tadashi Yamashina has confirmed that they'll be analysing this mistake and making sure it can be avoided in the future.

For Ferrari, it was the dream finish, Raikkonen ahead of Massa. It was a relatively easy victory and second place for the team, with Raikkonen leading from the start and Massa overtaking Alonso off the grid. Raikkonen sums it up, saying they are leading both championships now, so things could not be better.

All in all, a much more action packed race than Barcelona is used to seeing, and whilst there is still plenty of room for more overtaking, you couldn't ask for more at a race the drivers are so used to. As many of the press releases say, it's time to put this race behind us and look forward to Turkey.

F1 Digest will be back in two weeks when the action rolls around to Turkey, make sure you stay tuned to Sidepodcast.com for all the latest gossip and F1minute.com for daily news updates.