



F1 Digest – Prelude to the Hungarian Grand Prix

Christine: The Hungaroring has traditionally been less good at providing us with interesting racing action, instead holding our focus for the incidents and accidents that occur during the weekend. As the rest of the races up their game and get more exciting as the sport develops, Hungary continues to struggle. However, there's always room for a surprise, and as the last race to lead us into the summer break, we need a good one to tide us over. Vettel swept away with things in Germany, but it's a whole new weekend and anything could happen.

Mr C: This is F1 Digest - Prelude to the Hungarian Grand Prix, brought to you by Sidepodcast. Featuring a circuit guide, facts and figures, team prep and more - here's your host Christine Blachford.

Christine: There's nothing but sunshine on the long range forecasts, with just a few clouds hovering above the track on the Thursday ahead of the race, but clear skies overhead for the full race weekend. Temperatures will be high, with ambient measurements reaching 37 degrees C on Sunday. The warmer atmosphere will make things a little bit tougher on the drivers, but we're also seeing the new Pirelli tyres in action so how they will react to the conditions is also going to be key. Mercedes have struggled in the higher temperatures so far this season, whilst Lotus have been hoping for more warmth for a while now. We could see another shift in the order this weekend.

The Hungaroring is a permanent racing track, but you'd be forgiven for thinking it was a street circuit. The track isn't in use for much of the rest of the year, making the surface difficult to handle early on in the weekend. It also has low speeds, and a lot of twisting corners, making it similar to the street circuits we know and love. There are 14 tight corners, and an average speed of about 180 kilometres per hour, making the Hungaroring the second slowest circuit on the calendar, after Monaco.

As the surface starts to develop, just a single racing line appears - and there can be a heck of a lot of tyre marbles discarded offline as the weekend unfolds. Overtaking is notoriously difficult at the track, with technical corners and a lack of straights to provide opportunities. The circuit is often described as similar to a go-karting track, with a lot of work required on the steering wheel to add to the challenge for drivers.

There will be 70 laps to make the full 307 kilometre race distance and the longest straight is just over 900 metres long. The pit lane loss is just under 19 seconds, and for those that love this type of statistic, there's a 20% chance of a safety car period during the grand prix.

This weekend, Pirelli will be providing the medium and soft compounds - the white and yellow sidewalls respectively. But these aren't the tyres we have seen before. After extensive testing and investigation into what happened during the British Grand Prix, and how these issues can be prevented, the Italian tyre manufacturer have made some changes.

The soft and medium tyres were in action in Hungary last year, and for 2013 they have last year's structure, with the softer compounds of the current season. The hotter temperatures will be harder on the rubber, although that is offset by the more twisting nature of the Hungaroring. The high proportion of tight corners means the edges of the tyres are put to work more and overheating could be an issue. Last year, the podium finishers were all on two-stop strategies, which is expected for this weekend as well, and the difference between the two compounds is about a second a lap.

We've had a three week break between races, which has allowed teams to go back to their factories and figure out their next plan of action. There's also been the three day test at Silverstone, where regular race drivers were allowed



to look at the tyres, and young drivers could help with the new updates. There should be some new bits and pieces on the cars as the trucks arrive at the Hungaroring.

This is the last race before the summer break, which includes the enforced two-week factory shutdown, so it's the final opportunity for teams to figure out what they need to do over the summer.

Hungary doesn't have a huge motorsport presence outside of Formula One, and they have only had one driver make it into the ranks - Zsolt Baumgartner who drove for Jordan and Minardi in 2003 and 2004.

Sebastian Vettel's victory at the last race in Germany only managed to extend his and Red Bull's championship lead over the rest of the field. The German driver took victory at his home race, something he hadn't achieved before, and he nixed the statistic that he hadn't won in July either. He now has a 34 point lead over Fernando Alonso. The double Lotus podium helped keep Kimi Räikkönen in the title fight, with just those three drivers over and above the 100 point mark. Romain Grosjean also moved up to eighth place after a strong podium finish.

In the constructor's championship, there was no significant movement after the race at the Nürburgring, but the battle for second place is hotting up. Mercedes sit on 183 points, with Ferrari on 180. McLaren also gathered a good selection of points, moving their total up to 49 - now only ten points behind Force India. Williams, Marussia and Caterham still await their first points this season.

The Sauber team have had a recent boost to their future prospects after a partnership was announced with Russian investors, and that allows them to concentrate on racing rather than finances. So far, the season hasn't gone very well for the Swiss team, but they're still hoping to turn things around. Esteban Gutiérrez reminisces about the track, saying: "I think Hungary can be a good weekend. The Hungaroring is one of those unique circuits in terms of the track layout, and I have good memories of it. It was the first European track I ever drove on during a test in Formula BMW."

Championship leader Sebastian Vettel is confident the focus this weekend will still be on the round parts of the car, he says: "We had two exciting races where tyres played an important role. This will be our first race back on the 2012 tyres and we'll see how they respond to the demands of the long corners and high track temperature."

And finally, second place finisher at the last race Kimi Räikkönen has his philosophical head on again. He says: "I have finished second in Hungary too many times, so I know how important it is to lead the race after the first corner. DRS or not, it's never easy to overtake... The heat has helped us with the car so far this year so that will make things better, but only if it's a win will you not suffer from the heat."

Mr C: This show was brought to you by Sidepodcast, with statistics from Pirelli s.p.a and Williams F1. To stay in touch with everything over a race weekend, visit sidepodcast.com, where you will find live comments and lap by lap coverage of qualifying and the race.