



## F1 Digest – Prelude to the Brazilian Grand Prix

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Christine: After eighteen races, across eight months and trekking back and forth across the globe, Formula One rocks up to Brazil for the final race of the season. The championships are decided, leaving nothing at stake but pride, glory and the simple joy of a good race. The US Grand Prix wasn't as exciting a race as it could have been, but anticipation ahead of the Brazilian weekend is high. A brilliant track, a fantastic atmosphere, and that end-of-term feeling in the paddock should all add up to send the 2013 season off in style.

Mr C: Welcome to F1 Digest - Prelude to the Brazilian Grand Prix. This episode previews all the useful information you'll need to know ahead of this weekend's season finale at Interlagos. Here's your host, Christine Blachford.

Christine: It's been a while since we saw rain affect a race, and although there is plenty of precipitation forecast for this weekend in São Paulo, the long-range forecasts have Sunday as rain-free. There are thunder storms early in the week, easing up to just rain on Friday and Saturday, with a cloudy day on Sunday. Temperatures are set to hover in the mid-20s with humidity up in the 70% range - unless it's actually raining, of course.

The Brazilian Grand Prix doesn't always host the season finale, but it always should. The weekend is a good one, no matter what occurs out on track, and the atmosphere really manages to send F1 fans into the off-season with a smile on their faces. The weather plays its part, the exhaustion of a long-season completed, and the wear and tear on the cars can all add to the intricacies of an F1 weekend at Interlagos.

The track itself sits 800 metres above sea level, so some of the more delicate engines can be punished around the 71 laps at top speed. The race is run in an anti-clockwise direction and the chances of a safety car are 70%.

The circuit has instantly recognisable surroundings, and heaps of elevation changes to keep the drivers' interest piqued. Perhaps not to the degree of turn one at Austin, but the final hill rising up past the advertising boards is one of the iconic parts of the track. Before that, there are four high speed straights, with several slow corners peppered in between.

The track begins with a slow left hander that leads through the Senna S's and then round a longer left to the back straight. A couple of fast corners to the left lead to a double apex-ed right hander, and then the weaving back and forth begins. By the time the drivers get to turn eleven, they've just got a couple more lefts to go before they rise up the aforementioned hill and cross the line for a full lap.

The tyres of choice this weekend are the hard and medium compounds, just like in the US. Pirelli are also bringing some experimental tyres for next year, which the teams will be given a chance to test during the free practice sessions on Friday. With the weekend's tyres bolted on, the drivers will have to take extra care to look after the rubber over the 4.3 kilometre circuit. Last year's typical strategy was a two stop, whilst the same tyres in the US favoured a one-stop strategy.

Pirelli boss Paul Hembery says: "There are a number of things to look out for in Brazil. Despite being resurfaced a few years back, the track is always quite bumpy, which makes it hard for the tyres to find traction and increases the physical demands on drivers."

The back to back races means drivers head from north to south America in double quick time. There's likely to be little attention paid to the machinery itself, as this is the final weekend that the cars will need to be used. That being



said, reliability could be an issue as we've started to see components giving up the ghost as they draw to the end of their useful lives.

Drivers and team members are likely pretty tired and ready for a break, the second half of this season has had a punishing schedule. The party atmosphere in Brazil will help lift the spirits, though, and as host of the season ending race, Interlagos usually delivers.

It only took one race for the absent Kimi Räikkönen to drop down the standings. Lewis Hamilton overtook the Finn for third place after the US Grand Prix. Mark Webber is only two points behind, so there could be another place lost for Kimi by season's end. I'm sure he won't mind though, the FIA Gala has never been his sort of party. Kimi's replacement, Heikki Kovalainen, didn't manage to come home in the points in the US, but will get one more shot at the top ten in Brazil. Meanwhile, Pastor Maldonado lost out to his teammate in Austin, with Valtteri Bottas bringing home a solid four points for Williams, and jumping up to 17th place in the standings.

In the team battle, it's still second place that holds all the attention, but Mercedes have a 15 point lead over Ferrari, and have had the edge over the last couple of races. Lewis Hamilton looked particularly on form in Austin, but Felipe Massa will be cheered on by the home crowd in Brazil. McLaren finally tipped over the 100 points mark last weekend, and pulled away from Force India (who had optimistic but not very realistic hopes of catching them). Meanwhile, only Marussia and Caterham remain on zero points, and unless something particularly unusual occurs, that's unlikely to change.

Force India driver Paul di Resta needs to make the most of his weekend at Interlagos, as the Brit doesn't yet know what his future in Formula One will hold. Describing the complexities of the circuit, Paul says: "Because it's such a small track every hundredth and thousandth of a second becomes even more critical in qualifying. The lap has a very nice flow with a real variation of corners. There are fast sections, slow corners, elevation changes and off-camber parts of the lap. It may be small, but it has everything you need from a track."

Valtteri Bottas is buoyed up for his first race in F1 at Brazil, particularly after having done so well in the US. He says: "I think we will have a good opportunity to finish in the top 10 once again in Brazil. The weather is often quite variable at Interlagos which gives teams a chance to play with their strategy and make up places if we see rain during qualifying or the race. I drove in FP1 last year and I have done a lot of work in our simulator which correlates well to the actual track so I'm feeling well prepared."

And finally, Heikki Kovalainen knows there's no real pressure on his shoulders, and can really enjoy the weekend. He says: "The track itself is quite tricky. It's pretty narrow in parts and you need to make sure you get your lines right or it's very easy to make a mistake. It's also fair to say that it has one of the best atmospheres of the whole season. The fans are incredibly passionate about Formula 1. They're very knowledgeable and they turn the whole weekend into a giant party in the stands... It really is a cool place to race Formula 1 cars."

Mr C: You've been listening to F1 Digest, a preview show brought to you by Sidepodcast. Thanks go to Williams F1 and Pirelli s.p.a for stats and information. Make sure you visit sidepodcast.com across the race weekend for session results, live comments, and lap by lap coverage.