



## F1 Digest - Turkey Qualifying

---

### Intro

This is F1 Digest from Sidepodcast, welcome to our coverage of qualifying in Turkey. After some interesting results in Free Practice yesterday, I couldn't wait to see who was going to be ahead on Saturday.

### Free Practice 3

Saturday dawned bright and sunny, although the temperatures were still quite low. The air temperature was 15 degrees C, and the track temperature was 20. We didn't see any rain like we had yesterday, although there was a quick shower ahead of Free Practice that meant the track was declared wet.

This, in turn, meant we didn't see a lot of action to start with. Both Force India drivers led the installation laps, with Fisichella careful not to jump the red light at the end of the pit lane this time round. Once the installation laps were complete, there was over ten minutes of quiet, until eventually, Timo Glock roared down the pitlane in his Toyota. He was followed by Hamilton, who set an early lead.

With a drying track, Bourdais still managed to spin 360 degrees and ruined one of his laps. Rosberg and Trulli were both on good laps though, going P2 and P3 respectively.

At about half time, the Ferraris came out on track, leaving only Coulthard without a time. As they were warming up, the battle at the top was between the two Renault's. On the Live Comment thread on Sidepodcast.com, Alianora left us a thought: "I hope Raikkonen's doing endurance work or something. He can't even beat Fisichella at the moment." Thankfully, Raikkonen posted the ninth fastest time, then improved to fifth. Renault stopped being the team mates battling for the top spot, and Kovalainen and Hamilton took over.

In the Live Comments, Steven Roy picked up on something he spotted in the previous practice sessions: "The bottom of the back of Fisi's car was spewing sawdust everywhere yesterday. Could be the first illegal plank penalty in years."

When Coulthard finally got on the timesheets, he slid quickly into third, was pushed down, and then improved on his time to retake third fastest. On Sidepodcast.com, Dank remarked on DC's progress, saying: "Hope he can keep up this momentum from yesterday afternoon and put it into good use for qualifying later." It was a good morning for Red Bull, as Webber took second, and towards the end of the session Coulthard went P1. It didn't last long, of course, he was beaten by Webber. I know, you thought I was going to say one of the top four, like Raikkonen, but he was struggling with something in the setup and only finished in 11<sup>th</sup>.

The fastest five at the end of the session were Webber, Alonso, Coulthard, Rosberg and Massa.

### Quali 1

The temperature had warmed up a few degrees between Free Practice 3 and Qualifying, but there was no rain predicted for the entire session. With Super Aguri out of the picture, the qualifying rules have been tightened up so we lose five drivers at the end of quali 1 and 2. This means it's even closer at the bottom, and in the first session Fisichella hit the track first, followed by Glock, Bourdais and Vettel. Glock posted the first quick lap time. When Raikkonen and Hamilton emerged from the pitlane, it didn't take long for the usual names to dominate the timesheets. Raikkonen posted the fastest time, then he was beaten by Kovalainen who was immediately pushed down by Hamilton. For this first round of flying laps, Massa could only manage fourth.



On the live comment thread, Scott left a message: “Nice lap from Hamilton! McLaren are back!!” and Lou echoed his thoughts: “Maccas looking fast.”

The BMWs left it late, sitting out the first half of the session in the garage. With just under nine minutes left, Kubica headed out first and went P9 on his initial effort, Heidfeld went P7. Kubica improved to fifth, but Heidfeld had to abort his next lap when he encountered some traffic.

With their places in the top four secured, it was a surprise to see the Ferrari’s hit the track again during the second batch of laps, but Massa improved to take the quickest time. All eyes were on Trulli though, whose status as qualifying specialist was confirmed when he slotted into fourth. Corey posted on Sidepodcast.com: “Trulli is really the one-lap specialist. Where does this guy find the speed whenever it counts and why not show it in the race?”

At the end of the session, the top three were Massa, Hamilton and Raikkonen, and dropping out were Nakajima, Piquet, Bourdais, Fisichella, and Sutil.

### *Quali 2*

When the lights went green and the second session got underway, there was a curious lack of activity out on track. With only fifteen minutes to get a flying lap in, four of them were wasted in the garages. However, Alonso, Coulthard and Webber were some of the first to hit the track, with Coulthard posting the fastest time, pushed down by Alonso and then ousted from second by his team mate.

Raikkonen finished his flying lap to take P1, followed by Massa who slotted into second, and Hamilton fitted nicely in third. Kubica looked to be on a strong lap, posting the quickest final sector so far, but he made a mistake in the last sector and finished fourth. Heidfeld, meanwhile, was struggling down in tenth.

Everyone dived into the pits bar the BMWs and Kovalainen, and everyone bar the Ferraris came out for another go. During the last minute, there were general improvements across the board but no major upsets. On the live comment thread, Alenyaa noticed: “11 cars within a second of each other!”

The fastest three in Quali 2 were Raikkonen, Kubica and Massa, and we lost Rosberg, Barrichello, Button, Vettel and Glock.

Lou left a comment on Sidepodcast.com, saying: “Both Hondas not through. I blame the wheel bins!”

### *Quali 3*

For the final knockout session, Heidfeld and Trulli emerged first, quickly followed by Hamilton. Heidfeld only completed one lap before diving back into the pit lane again. Trulli was the first to set a lap time, which was quickly beaten by Hamilton. Hamilton, in turn, was swiftly demoted by Massa. Kubica slotted into second, but he was pushed down by Raikkonen. Hamilton appeared to be having difficulties keeping control of the car towards the end of the lap, and when he went into the pits, he chose to change to the harder tyre, traditionally the slower of the two choices.

The Red Bull pair left it until there was less than three minutes remaining before posting a lap time, and whilst Coulthard couldn’t improve from tenth, Webber slotted in midway up the top ten.

Hamilton managed to secure second, despite the tyres and a bit of a wobble. Team mate Kovalainen took pole momentarily, before Massa rounded the last corner and stole it from him. Corey noted Hamilton’s struggles on Sidepodcast.com: “Hamilton having to dominate the car on those hard tyres. That was a crazy lap.”



The final grid positions went to Massa, Kovalainen, Hamilton, Raikkonen, Kubica, Webber, Alonso, Trulli, Heidfeld and Coulthard.

On Sidepodcast.com, Lady Snowcat had a theory for the driver she supports: "Now it'll be down to fuel. If the difference between Q2 and Q3 is appropriate Kimi has fuel on board."

### Conclusions

---

Overall, that was a fascinating qualifying session, with some decision making in the McLaren garage that didn't necessarily go the right way, and some of the mid-field runners placing highly, while our usual top guys struggled.

For Toyota, it was a mixed bag. Trulli is happy to be on the fourth row, better than he expected, but not completely confident in the car's set-up. He says at various points he had understeer and oversteer so the car was a difficult drive. Glock is disappointed with his result, as he felt he was pushing the car, but he did mention a problem with the right front wheel that meant he had to abandon a flying lap in Quali 2.

Red Bull had a great qualifying session and both drivers are satisfied with their positions. Webber in 6<sup>th</sup> is glad to have made up for the accident yesterday, although he does say the downside of their position is he's on the dirty side of the grid. Coulthard had tyre issues in the third session of qualifying, having used all his sets of soft tyres to get there. He says: "As a result, we only had primes left at the end. We only did one run in Q3 as we wanted to save fuel, so the car was very heavy."

For Force India, Mike Gascoyne sums up their qualifying: "I think in Giancarlo's case he got the most out of the car today considering his penalty. Adrian had a small lock up on his last run which cost him some time, but overall that is where the car is on this type of track." Hmm, I'm not sure why Fisichella's penalty affects what he gets out of the car, but there you go. He will start last on the grid.

Williams also had a pretty bad day with Rosberg 11<sup>th</sup> and Nakajima 16<sup>th</sup>. One of the most interesting quotes of the day is from technical director Sam Michael who says: "Kazuki missed out on a place in Q2 by just a tenth. We expected him to be slightly behind as we didn't have some recent aero updates available for him." I think it's fair to say we judged Nakajima quite harshly, especially in the live comments, but this may go some way to explaining the poor performance.

In the Toro Rosso garage, Vettel believes he is finally getting a handle on the car and making some steps forward, but the changeable track conditions led to his 14<sup>th</sup> placed on the grid. Bourdais, meanwhile, had a bit of a rant. "Bad traffic, basically the Force India guys, ruined my afternoon: on my first run I was held up by Sutil as early as Turn 3 and on the second, I came up behind Fisichella in Turn 8. That meant we weren't too sure about the handling of the car and I asked for an adjustment to be made for the last run which turned out not the right thing to do. It's annoying because I came within two tenths of Q2. Everyone seems to behave quite well in qualifying, but I don't know what those guys were doing on their "out" laps. It was a bit surprising. Starting eighteenth, our expectations are limited, but I will give it my best shot as usual and try and make the most of any unusual circumstances that might occur." It's definitely going to take something unusual.

For BMW, Kubica is happy with his 5<sup>th</sup>, although says he was expecting a little bit more. The extra fuel in the last session appeared to affect the balance of the car. Heidfeld, though, isn't convinced that 9<sup>th</sup> is good enough, but sees the silver lining round the cloud by saying qualifying was much better than practice.

Hamilton is ruing his last minute tyre choice, saying: "I am not completely satisfied with third place today, as I think I could have gone a bit faster and also didn't make the right tyre choice as I was on the harder Bridgestone tyre for my



final run. I did a great lap in Q1 and felt the car worked better there than in Q2 which was why I made the tyre decision I did. My final lap wasn't that great either, so all in all I am a bit disappointed." Kovalainen, of course, is content to start from the front row.

Whilst we all would have liked to see Barrichello a bit further up the grid for his record-breaking Grand Prix start, the Honda boys are taking it in their stride. Barrichello pinpointed the problem as balance rather than tyres or the lack of grip, and is sure he got the best out of the car that he could. Button says the tyres were his downfall though. He, like Hamilton, found the soft tyres a handful, and opted for the hard tyres instead. Therefore, Button says he is "reasonably pleased" with 13<sup>th</sup> place.

There's a stark divide in the Renault camp with Alonso comfortably in 7<sup>th</sup> place, whilst Piquet couldn't get past the first qualifying session and finished 17<sup>th</sup>. Piquet is understandably disappointed, but makes no mention of reasons or excuses, just promises to work hard with his engineers for the race. Alonso says he thinks they could have done a bit better than 7<sup>th</sup> but he continues to still be happy with the progress Renault are making.

And finally, our pole sitters Ferrari. Raikkonen says he would prefer to have been further up the grid than 4<sup>th</sup>, but points out: "Of course, there's a question mark over fuel loads and we won't get an answer to that until the first pit stops tomorrow afternoon. I am a bit disappointed but I made mistakes on my second lap in Q3 and I have to accept that." Massa, meanwhile, is over the moon to take his third pole position in a row, and can't wait for the race tomorrow.

I would echo that sentiment. Join us on Sidepodcast.com during the race where we will be live commenting, then call us to leave your thoughts on 0121 28 87225, and of course, tune in to F1 Digest for a complete round up of all the action.

sidepodcast.com  
YOUR WEEKLY F1 FIX