



F1 Digest - Monaco Preview

Intro

Welcome to F1 Digest for Canada. This is Sidepodcast's dedicated coverage to all the action over a Formula 1 weekend, and today we are previewing the race in Montreal.

Vital Statistics

Date: 8th June

Circuit: Circuit Gilles Villeneuve

Length: 4.4km

Laps: 70

2007 Winner: Lewis Hamilton

Last Year

As always, before we look ahead to this weekend, let's remind ourselves what happened in 2007.

[Begin Montage]

Chris: In Qualifying 1, Coulthard had problems straight away.

Me: He said on the radio that his brakes were crabbing, which basically means that it was snatching the car to the left or to the right, and it wasn't going in a straight line when he was braking.

Chris: Crabbing.

Me: Crabbing.

Chris: Kovalainen tagged the wall again.

Me: In a big way.

Chris: Again in a big way. He lost his rear wing, caused a red flag.

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Chris: It was all about Hamilton versus Alonso, wasn't it?

Me: It was, and I'm not quite sure where McLaren have managed to make up that gap, or where Ferrari have lost it, but that was definitely a surprise to end up where they were. Maybe they were running heavy.

Chris: The final qualifying positions were Hamilton, Alonso, Heidfeld, Raikkonen, Massa, then Webber, Rosberg, Kubica, Fisichella and Trulli.

Me: Incidentally, there you have the customer car teams again ahead of the works car teams with Williams ahead of Toyota and Red Bull ahead of Renault.



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Chris: Everyone started well except for Button who didn't.

Me: Didn't go anywhere.

Chris: He had gear selection issues and went nowhere. Alonso tried too hard on the first corner, screwed it up, lost two places, just like he did in Barcelona. But the way he span, he spun off then back onto the track, it was so close to Hamilton, it was like, crazy lucky.

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Chris: But then Sutil hit the wall and brought out the first safety car of the day. Alonso and Rosberg both pitted but the change in the safety car rules means that the pit lane closes when the safety car comes out, so it was touch and go whether they had made it or not and they were investigated and the stewards decided they both deserved a ten second stop/go penalty. When the pit lane actually opened, everyone dived into the pits, the Ferrari's were stacked up behind each other. Massa and Fisichella exited the pit lane through the red light because the safety car was going round. That's exactly the same as Montoya did two years ago and he got black flagged. The cars were under investigation.

Me: Strange that it happened at this track again, I mean, I haven't seen a black flag since that Montoya incident in Canada and then in Canada, the same thing kind of happens again.

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Chris: And then Kubica had a massive crash. I have never seen an accident that big before. He flipped over. He smashed into the wall, he flipped over on the track, he went all the way to the other side of the track, then smashed into that wall as well, and ended up sideways.

Me: It was just the monocoque left, wasn't it?

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Chris: Sato overtook Raikkonen on the hairpin.

Me: What?

Chris: Sato overtook Raikkonen on the hairpin.

Me: On merit?

Chris: Yes. Overtaking manoeuvre. Sato. Raikkonen.

Me: Wow. Kimi Raikkonen is having the worst season of all time, isn't he?

Chris: Ever. And Sato is having the best.

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Chris: Top 8 finishing positions: Hamilton, then Heidfeld, then Wurz. Kovalainen in 4th. Raikkonen, Sato, Alonso and then Ralf Schumacher.

[End Montage]

Insider's View

Chris: Now it's time to hand over to our experts. First we'll hear from ex-F1 Driver Christian Danner who points out one of the most important aspects of the circuit...

Danner: Cooling is absolutely vital, cooling for the brakes, and if there's a mistake or there is a little problem on brake temperatures, you end up in deep trouble because the brakes are not going to survive until the end of the race.

Chris: And Luca Marmorini, Technical Director of Engines for Toyota, gives us a look at what they've been doing to prepare for this circuit. Last year, they struggled incredibly with the kerbs, and they've been working hard to fix it.

Marmorini: Typically before Canada, or any other race, we have in our computer the complete throttle behaviour, that maybe can reproduce Jarno's driving style or even a virtual driver. That is trying to make his lap time, with the dyno, and in this way we can already start to anticipate some potential problem in terms of engine response or engine mapping that the driver or the team can find directly in Canada.

Chris: Has anyone told him that the kerbs have been lowered this year anyway?

Team Thoughts

We're not the only ones who have taken a look back at last year, the entire BMW team must be remembering Kubica's awful crash in 2007. The man himself doesn't appear too perturbed, saying that despite the accident, Montreal remains one of his favourite tracks. Heidfeld also makes mention of the city having a good atmosphere which makes racing much more enjoyable. He's also looking to repeat his second place from last year, hopefully this time without being overshadowed by Kubica.

For Toyota, Trulli is hoping to have a cleaner weekend than at the last race. He says: "We have a completely different package compared to Monaco and I'm confident we can get a better result. The weather and traffic made things difficult for me in Monaco but I know we have a much better package than the result shows. My goal is to return to the points and I think we have a good chance of doing that." Glock made his Grand Prix debut in Canada in 2004, scoring two points on his first F1 outing. He's hoping to repeat that feat, although my guess is that's unlikely.

Whilst we're in the mood for comparing drivers to last year, Hamilton is in with a chance of repeating his win at the circuit. Last year he scored his first, debuted on the top step of the podium, and never looked back. He says: "As I said on Sunday, winning at Monaco is the highlight of my career, it was a very emotional victory for me as it is something I have dreamed of since I was a kid. I will never forget the moment, but now my only focus with the team is Canada." Seems to me that if Monaco is the highlight of your career, what else is there to look forward to? Heikki, meanwhile, is concentrating on a team effort, saying: "I am going to Montreal to get a good result with the team. The last few races have been pretty difficult for one reason or another, but all the time we know the car is quick and now I am hoping to be able to demonstrate that." He also highlighted three specific needs for succeeding in Montreal – good brakes, ability to take the kerbs, and staying out of the wall.

Jenson Button has picked out some of the key areas of the circuit for us. "Getting off the grid cleanly is also important as the first couple of corners are very tight with all 20 cars trying to squeeze through, although you can



overtake here if the opportunity presents itself. The hairpin at turn ten is probably the best opportunity for overtaking and where you can see some pretty exciting racing." Barrichello is hoping to take the momentum from his first points score in Monaco, and bring it to this weekend, but Ross Brawn talks of a lack of data. "We ran the RA108 in low downforce specification on a Montreal configured layout of the Paul Ricard circuit on the final day of the test before Monaco. Unfortunately the weather conditions were very poor which resulted in most of the day being washed out. However Jenson was able to achieve a few laps to obtain some basic aerodynamic data, which we have used along with data from previous years, to prepare our specific aerodynamic package for this race."

You would be pushed to say Nakajima is looking forward to this weekend. He's only driven in Free Practice 1 in 2007, and knows the track is not an easy one to master. Rosberg, meanwhile, is banking on the history of Williams at the circuit – in that they tend to go well there. He's feeling 100 per cent better after his accident in Monaco, and ensures us that it was his decision to go to hospital on the Sunday for routine checks. Of Canada, Rosberg says: "I'm heading to Montreal a few days early to get used to the time difference and to see the city. There are lots of cool bars, restaurants and clubs, and there are some good places to go shopping. There are also some beautiful places around the city, especially near the mountains, where I like to go for my daily run. The locals really get behind Formula One and they seem to be quite supportive of me too as many of them remember my father when he raced there."

For Renault, Alonso is feeling relatively confident and sure that the car will not be too much to handle this race. He is happy with the progress the team have been making since the Spanish Grand Prix, and expects them to just keep getting better. Piquet, meanwhile, is still under observation by the team, there are rumours he has been given a two race window to improve, or face the consequences. He says he's feeling fairly confident ahead of Canada, feeling it to be an easier circuit than Monaco.

Team principal of Force India, Colin Kolles, gives us an insight into how the team are feeling right now, and how they are getting over the Monaco incident. "The team were all frustrated with the result, but there are 12 races and therefore 12 chances left that we now need to concentrate on. Canada, like Monaco, could be a good race for us with all teams developing special aero and mechanical packages that will only be used in this one race. With safety car periods and rain also a possibility you could see some surprises too." It's a shame they still need to rely on the weather for a good result, but both Fisichella and Sutil hail the constant improvement of the team and say they continue to work hard to aim for the points.

Kimi Raikkonen has issued his predictions for the Grand Prix, saying that it will all come down to the Safety Car. He doesn't recall a Canadian GP that hasn't involved a safety car, so he thinks strategy is going to play a massive part in how the weekend goes for them. Meanwhile Massa is taking great spirit from the improved performance of the Ferrari around Monaco, and believes the similarities to Montreal will mean they can speed their way to a good finish.

Who am I left with? Ah yes, Red Bull and Toro Rosso. Neither of them produce preview press releases, so I looked around for any news or quotes from them. There is little to go on. Vettel says he won't judge the speed of the new car on the race in Monaco, as it was a crazy day. That's about it for both teams, so let's see if they can keep as quiet over the whole weekend and sneak in some points finishes.

That's it for today, don't forget to join us on Sidepodcast.com during Free Practice, there will be plenty of discussion going on in the Live Comment threads. If you can't make it, tune in to F1 Digest tomorrow for a full round up of all the action. It will be later than normal, due to the time difference to Canada, but I will return with a full review. See you then.