



F1 Digest - Canada Free Practice

Intro

You're listening to F1 Digest from Sidepodcast, dedicated race weekend coverage. Today we're talking about Free Practice 1 and 2 in Canada.

Free Practice 1

There was heavy rain ahead of FP1, so the first session was declared wet. Both air and track temperature were hovering around 17 degrees C, and as the installation laps began, another light shower was starting. Trulli completed two installation laps, whilst Raikkonen, Massa and Button were the last drivers to emerge from the pit lane. There was the obligatory gap, though, when no one wanted to be the first to brave the rain. Dirty Scarab left a comment on Sidepodcast.com, saying: "I'm surprised most people have waited almost 30 minutes into the session to venture out. I would have thought the engineers would need as much wet weather data as they can get considering it might be wet for the race..." and Alianora replied with: "The most likely thing according to the weather forecasts I've seen is that it will be dry on Sunday. However, I too would have thought it wise to do some wet running, considering that this is Friday and gearbox and engine can be changed."

The Force India boys were the first to complete full laps with Sutil taking the first official time. Nakajima joined the pair on track, and then everyone decided it was time to have a go. The rain stopped, and the track was still wet, so it wasn't a surprise to see Rosberg fastest, with a Honda, a Toyota and a Toro Rosso all vying for the top few spots. Even Piquet managed to post the fourth fastest time at one point. The two Ferrari's took to the track, with Raikkonen completing a couple of laps, and Massa posting second, behind Trulli. Yes, the track was still wet.

Button ran wide and returned to the pits, leaving just the two Toyotas on track, and Glock ousted his team mate from the top spot. Over at Sidepodcast.com, Scott commented: "Glock's now a full second and a half faster. Dry tyres are definitely the way to go now."

With less than twenty minutes to go, neither Red Bull drivers or McLaren boys had put their names on the board, whilst Raikkonen was about to stamp his mark on proceedings. On his second attempt at a flying lap he went quickest, which must have spurred the others on, as everyone came out on track. Rosberg took the top spot briefly, but Raikkonen grabbed it straight back, with Massa slotting into third, immediately pushed down by Webber. Alonso went third, then was demoted by Hamilton, who in turn was demoted by Heidfeld. Massa, Trulli and Kovalainen struggled around their respective corners, and the track appeared to still be quite slippery.

Massa recovered really well, though, and took the top spot, joined briefly in second by Kovalainen. At the end of the session, the fastest five were Massa, Kubica, Kovalainen, Heidfeld and Raikkonen.

Lady Snowcat summed up the session for Ferrari: "The track was getting faster and the guys out at the end benefitted... Massa did his fast laps in the last few and Kimi fastest two sectors preceded him going in....several mins before the end..." Whilst Lou commented on the other end of the timesheets: "So honda are looking criminally slow! Button is a second slower than Le Seb in p19, and Rubens is not looks much better."

Free Practice 2

There was no more rain between the two sessions, giving the track the chance to dry up considerably. The air temperature had warmed slightly to 19 degrees C, whilst the track temperature a bit more at 21.



Kubica was the first out, immediately the light went green, but not so quickly that he ran into the groundhog making it's way across the track. With all wildlife out the way, he was joined by Heidfeld, both Toro Rossos and two Toyotas. In fact, almost everyone took to the track, with the first five minutes being particularly manic. Hamilton took an early lead, with Kubica close behind.

Piquet had a bad start by spinning a complete circle. Kovalainen ousted his team mate from the top spot, and Raikkonen just missed out by posting in second. After twenty minutes, we were already exhausted by the battle between the Ferrari and McLarens, with three of the four drivers switching places. Eventually, for a short while, it was Raikkonen, Hamilton, Massa.

Tom had a thought over on Sidepodcast.com, saying: "Does anyone else think that the wheel bins are just going to collect loads of brake dust like we saw in Australia with Hamilton? Because it's such a heavy braking circuit, I can see the pit crews having real trouble with them."

Braking was causing trouble all over the track, Webber screwed up at the hairpin, Fisichella almost ran into the wall of champions, but it was Piquet having the worst day. He made a late decision to pull into the pitlane, but slowed and stopped before getting back to the garage. The smoke was rising slowly from all four corners of the car, and the mechanics had to come and retrieve him from the pit lane entrance. After he was out of the car, Piquet sat on the pit wall and Lou left a Live Comment: "Piquet still has his helmet on. Can we take it he is not too happy." And Steven Roy added: "Piquet sitting on the pitwall looked like a caption contest picture if I ever saw one."

Several minutes later, Alonso spun at the Island Hairpin and beached the car on the side of the track. He had a long walk back to the pit lane. Kubica brushed the wall of champions but still managed to improve to second. Glock hit a wall on a different part of the circuit and wasn't so lucky, having to retire from the session. The next driver to suffer was Massa, who slowed right down, and pulled off track. He climbed out of the car, and walked away, but didn't go too far. It's a good job too, as the marshals made a complete hash of pushing the car to safety, seemingly unable to figure out which way to turn the steering wheel. At one point Massa was pushing his own car. When was the last time you saw that happen?

Whilst it was somewhat amusing, or embarrassing, to watch the marshals struggling, it must have been worse for the drivers on track, as yellow flags were being waved throughout the almost ten minutes of kerfuffle. Elsewhere, Sutil slid round the chicane but kept control, whilst Webber was not so lucky, spinning into the gravel. He did manage to get going again though.

In the final few minutes, everyone who could was out on track, except for Fisichella and Coulthard, and the times closed up considerably.

The fastest five at the end of the session were Hamilton, Kubica, Raikkonen, Kovalainen and Massa.

Conclusions

So you've heard what me and my fellow commenter's thought of proceedings, but let's take a look at what the teams made of their day.

Firstly, the Williams drivers are feeling pretty confident after a productive day. Rosberg says they managed to achieve plenty of setup work and found the right direction to go on. Nakajima, meanwhile, was happy to not have to learn a track for once, and could spend more time on his own setup. Technical Director Sam Michael added that they did some good work on tyre comparisons and he's happy they had no reliability problems.



For BMW, both Kubica and Heidfeld felt the morning wasn't as productive as it should have been, due to the wet track. Kubica says: "We had a very busy afternoon, after losing quite a bit of time in the morning due to a damp track. However, we were also able to do the tyre comparison, so we have a good base to start with for tomorrow." Heidfeld added: "In the second session there was always a yellow flag somewhere when I was on fresh tyres, but we did a lot more running and had no technical problems."

Trulli appears to be in a low mood today, saying it was a difficult couple of sessions, the track was green, and it was hard to get the most out of the tyres. He thinks they've got plenty of work to do ahead of qualifying, and he's not sure how well they will do this weekend. Glock hit the wall in the second session, but is still feeling positive, and hopeful, of a good performance for the rest of the weekend.

Sutil branded the day average and Fisichella called it typical, so clearly there's some work to be done on motivation in the Force India camp. Sutil isn't happy with the balance of his car, thinking it's probably the tyres, whilst Fisichella says there are a few areas they need to improve on. At least Mike Gascoyne feels the day was productive, saying he's happy they had no major problems.

Although the wet track of FP1 did mix up the times somewhat, the rest of the day was pretty quiet for Toro Rosso. Vettel says: "Overall, this was a good day for us. It's my first time driving on this track and even though it was wet in the morning, I have to say I like it and it reminded me a bit of the Melbourne circuit. We will have to analyse the other guys' times, but I think we are in better shape than we were at the end of the first day in Monaco, which means we are making progress and finding our way with the new car." Bourdais had a different experience, saying: "I had a difficult day, starting with a set-up that was very different to Seb's and I didn't like the car at all." He also compared his experience in previous years. "I had raced here before, but not in F1 and in some ways, that might have been a distraction as the reference points I had from Champ Car were completely wrong. The braking points are different and the entry speed into the corners is much higher. I have to forget about the past – it did not help!"

Hamilton is feeling particularly confident after today's running. He says the car improved on every lap, and the setup is good for him. He's also loving being back at the scene of his debut win. Kovalainen doesn't feel he's found the perfect balance on his car, yet, but he's confident they'll get there in the end.

Another team not getting too excited about today is Red Bull. Webber said: "A reasonable day." And Coulthard: "It was a normal Canada practice day." Well, there you go.

It's fair to say Renault had a pretty bad day. Alonso says: "I did not do much running this morning because we only have a limited amount of wet tyres and it made more sense to save them in case we need them later in the weekend." And of course, he didn't manage to complete FP2. Piquet said his main aim was to learn the circuit, which was tough considering it was damp in the morning, and he crashed out in the afternoon. Pat Symonds sums it up for us: "It's very difficult to tell anything from today."

We heard earlier from Lou that the Honda boys were running around at the back of the field, and it seems that this circuit is going to be a real challenge for them. Barrichello says: "We have been trying to make the car work with very low levels of downforce today, in order to be able to run at a competitive pace." And Jenson added: "It has been a tough day for us today and we need to fully understand why that was in order to make progress for the remainder of the weekend." That certainly sounds like two drivers preparing to work hard this weekend.

Whilst Raikkonen had a relatively easy day, posting some quick times, despite not topping the timesheets at all, Massa had some problems. "My car seemed to suffer some sort of blackout: gradually all the systems shut down and I had to stop at the side of the track. Of course, that's not good but it's better to have a problem in free practice than in qualifying or, worse still, in the race!" Stefano Domenicali also said that they haven't found the reason for the



problem with Massa's car just yet, and hopes they can understand that soon to get some good running for the rest of the weekend.

The next stage of the weekend is Free Practice 3 and qualifying. You can join us on Sidepodcast.com for the Live Comment threads, and get a mention on this show, or you can simply tune in to F1 Digest to catch up with all the action from Saturday in Canada.

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