



## F1 Digest – Free Practice Qualifying

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### *Intro*

Hi everybody, welcome to F1 Digest for Canada. This is the third show of our coverage and today we will be talking about Free Practice 3 and all three sessions of qualifying.

### *Free Practice 3*

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The temperatures had warmed up considerably from yesterday's cold and rainy day, with the air at about 24 degrees C and the track somewhere around 30. The Force India's were first out on track, but they were soon joined by everyone else, setting the usual installation laps. At first, it looked like there was oil on track, but then it appeared to be repairs that had been made to the asphalt overnight. None of the drivers wanted to be the first to try a flying lap on the greasy tarmac.

After 15 minutes, Heidfeld took the plunge and headed down the pitlane first, and he was soon joined by the Force India boys, and then more. Raikkonen was the first of the front runners to score a meaningful lap time, with Kubica running second, and Hamilton managing fifth. Kubica then leapfrogged Raikkonen to take the top spot, until Rosberg came in and posted the fastest time.

Lady Snowcat left a comment on the live thread at Sidepodcast.com, joking: "I wonder if the marmot tracks on the surface cause a problem..." However, the little woodchucks hadn't caused too much damage and the track was obviously improving, as some unusual names appeared at the top. Piquet posted the second fastest time behind Raikkonen, and although he slipped down to fourth, he was joined by Nakajima, Barrichello and Glock towards the faster end of the timesheets.

With well over half the session gone, Piquet managed a big slide, turning 360 degrees, although he still held his position in sixth. 15 minutes to go, and Vettel had a big crash, hitting the wall and sliding along it as his rear right tyre flew up in the air, the rim still attached to the car. Vettel climbed out okay, but there was debris everywhere, so the session was red flagged while the incident was cleared up. Kathi commented on the live comment thread: "His back tyre got loose and went flying. That was scary. Other than that the usual sideways against wall accident." Whilst Michael Roberts added: "The bigger issue is the lack of a spare car. If they need a new car then he won't qualify because it can't be checked over till Sunday."

Several minutes later, the lights went green again, and after a small delay, all the drivers returned to the track, most of them to test out the soft tyres. In the dying minutes of the session, Bourdais in the other Toro Rosso crashed into a different wall. It was a less heavy crash, although still with significant damage, and there were only yellow flags this time. No more flying laps from anyone. Alianora left a thought on the blog: "Do you suppose this would be a good time for Toro Rosso to exploit their common parents with Red Bull and ask the Red Bull crew to help with the repairs? I know it's against collusion rules, but they sure could use some help." As the chequered flag waved and the drivers returned to the pits, Piquet spun at the Wall of Champions, and stopped millimetres from the barrier.

At the end of the session the fastest five were Rosberg, Raikkonen, Hamilton, Massa and Nakajima.

### *Quali 1*

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The Toro Rosso mechanics did not have enough time to fix up Vettel's car, so he would not be taking part in qualifying and starts from the pitlane tomorrow. Bourdais did have a car to run with, but had to have a gearbox change, and therefore the obligatory five place grid drop from wherever he qualified.



Piquet was first out, but he was joined by many others, including Raikkonen, who took the opportunity to get in a couple of quick laps. Raikkonen posted the fastest time, followed by Massa, and when Hamilton had his turn at a flying lap, he couldn't get past fifth place, whilst Kovalainen managed second.

About halfway through the session, we were still waiting for both BMW drivers, Webber and Rosberg to make an appearance out on track, and while we were waiting, Hamilton and Kovalainen made it a McLaren 1-2. Lady Snowcat made an astute observation over on Sidepodcast.com, pointing out: "Lewis gets first due to his final sector..."

With Vettel already confirmed as being out, it was just a matter of keeping out of the bottom four, which Webber did by posting 13<sup>th</sup> then 6<sup>th</sup>, Coulthard crept into 8<sup>th</sup>, Barrichello 12<sup>th</sup>. Button, however, languished down in 19<sup>th</sup>, having only completed a couple of laps. He returned to the pits and climbed out of the car with a suspected gearbox problem. The cameras panned round to show Button discussing the problem with his engineers, and Lou commented: "That is one sad and unhappy Jenson."

Whilst the midfield continued to battle for position, Trulli spun it but managed to slot into tenth. At the end of the session, the fastest three were Hamilton, Massa and Kovalainen, and dropping out Bourdais, Sutil, Fisichella, Button and Vettel.

### Quali 2

The front runners appeared not to be taking any risks with the track this weekend, as Kovalainen, Raikkonen and Hamilton were all out early in Q2. Certain areas of the circuit appeared to be braking up, despite the overnight repairs that had hampered Free Practice earlier in the morning. Rosberg managed to post the fastest time, before Trulli spun again, ruining plenty of other drivers laps while he was at it.

Hamilton soon knocked Rosberg off the top spot, and Raikkonen then pushed him out of second, whilst Alonso turned up in 4<sup>th</sup>, momentarily. He was knocked down by Kubica, but in the other BMW, Heidfeld could only post the 11<sup>th</sup> fastest time. This could have been down to the hard tyres that Heidfeld was on, but we are not sure.

In the last few minutes, there were a few desperate attempts at a flying lap, which saw Trulli, well, I'll let Dom's comment tell you: "Trulli spins *again*..." At the same time, Rich noticed: "Piquet a second slower than team mate Alonso!"

Soon, the chequered flag was waved. The fastest three were Hamilton, Massa and Raikkonen, and we lost Glock, Nakajima, Coulthard, Trulli and Piquet.

On his in-lap, Webber spun and hit the wall, seemingly with no major damage, but not a great start to the top ten shoot out.

### Quali 3

It became obvious that Webber wouldn't be taking part in the final session of qualifying, and he was quick to blame it on the track conditions. Lou noticed a race control announcement, and commented on it: "Turn 10 to be swept before Q3 starts." Barrichello, who had somehow managed to scrape through into the final qualifying session, obviously knew he wasn't going to get much higher and did not emerge from the pit lane. Joe left a comment on Sidepodcast.com, saying: "Webber will be annoyed, makes it into Q3 and then damages the suspension. Surprised at Rubens making it really, he seems to be getting on with a car a lot better than Jenson, though they are running different set-ups."



However, of those who were taking part, the two McLarens were out first, followed by the Ferraris. The first round went to Hamilton, followed by Massa, Raikkonen and Kovalainen.

Alonso put his soft tyres to good use and posted second, but it didn't last long as Raikkonen took that same position moments later. The second round saw Raikkonen fail to beat Hamilton's time, but Kubica grabbed pole position for an instant. Hamilton completed an incredible lap, though, to take pole position by over half a second. Looks like Lady Snowcat was right about those final sectors.

The final top ten was Hamilton, Kubica, Raikkonen, Alonso, Rosberg, Massa, Kovalainen, Heidfeld, Barrichello and Webber.

### *Conclusions*

I have a feeling that the drivers comments today are going to harp on about the track conditions a lot, and whilst they do need some discussion, I'll try and find some of the other nuggets to talk about as well.

First up, Force India, who appeared to have a golden opportunity to reach their goal of Q2, with both Vettel and Button out of the running. Sutil says: "We were almost there, but just not enough today and we will start in 17<sup>th</sup>." Fisichella adds: "The grip this afternoon was definitely worse than the morning. It was practically undriveable and really disappointing that we could not have finished higher up."

Trulli also talks of how serious the problem is, saying: "Qualifying was exceptionally difficult today because the track conditions were a disaster. The surface was breaking up and getting worse with every lap. I don't know how the race will go but the track surface is a huge concern." Glock made mention of a difficulty in finding good balance, but that he knows Canada can have overtaking possibilities, if the track holds out.

Bourdais was not a happy fellow at the end of the session. He said: "Because of the wind, there was also a lot of debris and leaves, which made the track very slippery. After the morning, I could not afford to make any mistakes and run the risk of not taking up a start place for the race and in these conditions it was just unreal. For me this is one of the worst days of my career so far." Vettel spoke of his accident, admitting his mistake and wishing for a bit of extra run off area. Team principal Franz Tost said: "This morning we paid the price of the unforgiving Montreal walls and of having two young drivers, neither of whom had driven here in a Formula One car before Friday, pushing to the limit." When you put it like that Franz, they didn't do too badly, did they?

For Honda, Barrichello felt his experience allowed him to achieve the 9<sup>th</sup> place today, plus some momentum from his points finish in Monaco. Button meanwhile isn't feeling too confident about the race, settling for having to take whatever opportunities come their way.

Kubica knows that being second isn't as good as it could be, saying: "I'm very happy with second. Unfortunately I shall not be starting on the clean side. McLaren particularly looks very strong and I shall also have pressure from the Ferrari, but we have to see who is on which strategy." Heidfeld is pleased to have made progress from Monaco, but is still not 100% happy with the lap times he was putting in. He also felt he made some questionable tyre choices, and yes, the track conditions were also a problem.

Alonso is super happy in 4<sup>th</sup> place, as he admits: "We have done very little running this weekend and there were still a lot of unknowns before qualifying. The car is still a bit sensitive and the track changes quickly." Piquet had a difficult session, but it's hardly surprising really, as the track is new to him, and as we've heard it's completely broken, so a lack of running doesn't help.



For Williams, Nakajima is disappointed to have missed out on Q3 as he felt he had the pace to be able to do it here. However, he's banking on some safety car periods and other events during the race to allow a good points haul. Rosberg is pretty satisfied with his 5<sup>th</sup> position, mainly from the viewpoint of being able to keep the car completely under control, where others clearly couldn't.

Raikkonen admits that he struggled around Turn 10, but says it was quite unbelievable the amount of time that was lost there. He knows the car is quick, so it pretty much comes down to the track, which he describes as like driving on ice. Massa is disappointed with his 6<sup>th</sup> place: "This is definitely not the result we were expecting and it's a real shame, as we had everything in place to do well. The car was very quick, both yesterday and this morning and, but for the problem which occurred at turn 10, I could definitely have fought for a place at the front."

And finally, Red Bull. Coulthard blames traffic for his 13<sup>th</sup> position, saying he was stuck behind Bourdais at one point and Piquet at another. He is convinced they can have a strong race though. Webber is very unhappy with the state of the track, he says it's not realistic to run the race in Formula 1 cars, and maybe we should try motocross bikes instead. Either way, he uses that age old line: It's the same for everybody.

Well, that sums up Saturday in Canada. It all comes down to the race tomorrow, and it looks like it's going to be dictated by the state of the track. Let's hope we have a nice sensible race with any incidents resulting from the sport, not the state of the track, the groundhogs, or any other external influences. Join us on Sidepodcast.com for the live commenting, but most of all, enjoy the race.

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