



F1 Digest – Canada GP

Intro

Welcome to F1 Digest for the Canadian Grand Prix. We've looked at all the Free Practice sessions and Qualifying, but this is what it really comes down to, the race.

The Race

Ahead of the start, we had the news that Jenson Button would be changing his gearbox, and thus starting from the pit lane, along with Vettel who had trashed his car yesterday. We also discovered that emergency repairs had been done on the track, at the Turn 10 hairpin in particular, and also at Turn 7, where both Toro Rosso drivers struggled earlier in the weekend.

MyFaFantasy left an early comment on Sidepodcast.com, saying: "Hey guys, just saw Heidfeld and Kubica leaving their cars during drivers parade and checking out the resurfaced bits of track - both Nick and Robert touched the new asphalt to see what it was like. I think Heidfeld even tried to smell it."

No rain was predicted for the entire race duration, and the track temperature was somewhere around 36 degrees C, whilst the air temperature stayed on 27.

The first few corners were perfect, no crashes or silly incidents from anybody. Rosberg made a pass on Alonso in the first corner for fourth, whilst Heidfeld lost a place to Barrichello, almost allowing Webber past as well. The Red Bull, however, dropped back to 11th. The entire pack took it relatively cautiously round the first lap, testing out the repaired surface and finding their feet on the unfamiliar tarmac. Then things settled down somewhat, and Hamilton began to stretch out a comfortable lead. On the Live Comment thread, Steven Roy noted: "Lewis did 9 purple sectors in a row and then three non-purples. Can the track be slowing already?"

Heidfeld was struggling to get back past Barrichello, but after a couple of laps made a dive for the position and made it work. Towards the back, Piquet made a good overtaking manoeuvre on Glock, and got past the first Toyota. His next target was Trulli, but he wasn't being quite so obliging. After a lap or two, Piquet got frustrated, and banged into Trulli round the hairpin, muscling his way past, and luckily not damaging either himself or Trulli's car.

Sutil pulled off track, and climbed out of the car, retiring from the race. For a moment, it seemed as though the marshals were happy to leave the car where it was, thinking it was off the racing line. Then it caught on fire, and they had to run back to it with their extinguishers. Then we got a good overhead shot that showed the car with its rear sticking out onto the track. The safety car was deployed and the marshals retrieved the car. Felipe Leite predicted trouble on Sidepodcast.com: "Safety car. Who will have to stop during the SC period? Whose race will be screwed today? By the way, Rubens can get advantage of this as he is supposed to stop only once..."

Hamilton's lead was drastically reduced as the safety car picked him up and began circling. Button came into the pit lane, although it wasn't open at the time, but for reasons as yet unknown he wasn't penalised. When the pit lane did open, a whole host of cars took the opportunity to come into the pits – some of the teams even stacking their drivers up behind each other. Kubica and Raikkonen were the first to make it to the end of the pit lane, with Hamilton taking on a lot more fuel. They were waiting at the red light, and Hamilton came down the pit lane, didn't slow and crashed into the back of Raikkonen. Rosberg, just behind Hamilton, also didn't slow and lost his front wing. Raikkonen and Hamilton were out of the race, whilst Kubica and Rosberg carried on, the Williams having to pit next time round for a new nose. There were plenty of thoughts on the Live Comment thread, but Poppy said: "do these drivers actually



take a regular driving test or what?” and F1Punter brought up a conspiracy theory: “At least Lewis had the presence of mind to steer in to his main championship rival.” But I didn’t think it looked deliberate, and Kathi agreed, saying: “He tried to go where more room was. And that was unfortunately Kimi’s side.”

Massa also came into the pits the next time round, despite having been stacked up behind his team mate. It turns out there was a miscommunication in the pits, and he didn’t get any fuel.

The safety car came in, and we now had the field in two halves – those who had pitted and those who hadn’t. Heidfeld headed up the “hadn’t” pack, but soon dived into the pit lane for his one and only stop. This allowed Barrichello into the lead, but he was also yet to stop. Andrew from Pittsburgh commented: “Is it really a Trulli train if it’s led by a Honda (Barrichello)? Close enough, I guess...” And a few minutes later, Steven Roy added: “There is a trulli train behind Trulli as well.” Heidfeld came out into the middle of the traffic, but just ahead of team mate Kubica. Being stuffed full of fuel, though, it wasn’t long before Kubica made a pass on Heidfeld and got in front.

The stewards announced that Raikkonen, Rosberg and Hamilton would all be investigated for the pit lane incident. The front runners still to pit all came in one by one, meaning several different race leaders – Barrichello handed it to Coulthard, who gave it to Trulli, then Glock. Finally, though, the real standings shone through, when Glock pitted, and Kubica took the lead.

Lee Vilenski left a prediction on Sidepodcast.com: “It’s going to really be between the Renaults and BMWs.” However, whilst his team mate was charging ahead at the front, Heidfeld was struggling to hold off an impatient Alonso. After a couple of failed attempts from the Renault, Heidfeld was told that if he was losing time holding him up, then he should let Alonso past. He didn’t have to worry though, because next time round, Alonso took it too far, spun and hit the wall, ending his own race.

Nakajima also retired, having bumped into Button and dislodging his front wing. He made it to the pit lane entrance, but then the wing fell off and the Williams ran over it. He couldn’t make it back to the garage.

At the end of lap 48, Kubica came in for the decisive pit stop. It was a clean stop by the mechanics, and he made it out well in front of Heidfeld. Close behind, Kovalainen was making a charge, trying to get past Barrichello for fourth, and as they both ran wide round the hairpin, Massa undercut them both to gain two positions. A stunning piece of overtaking.

At the back of the pack, Fisichella spun and brushed up against the wall. He climbed from the car, and it was touch and go whether the safety car would be called again. Just in case, all those still needing to stop did so, with Massa, Kovalainen, Button and Webber all diving into the pit lane – Massa undoing all that hard work he just did. The safety car, however, did not come out. Gaulty questioned the decision, however, in the Live Comments, saying: “Just double yellows, seems safe enough. Not, what a ridiculous place to crash and not get out a safety car.”

Running in third, Coulthard was having a quiet afternoon, but was told to look after his brakes during the final stint of the race, as they were running pretty hot. Behind him, there were two major battles for position going on. Rosberg and Kovalainen were all over each other, the Finn running wide at one point and allowing the Williams through, then managing to retake the position. Kovalainen then closed up on Vettel. Massa overtook Barrichello for sixth, making his way back through the pack after his final pit stop. He then had the task of catching Trulli, who was struggling with his brakes. The Ferrari made short work of the Toyota, after Trulli ran wide.

There were not enough laps for Kovalainen to take Vettel, or Massa to catch his next victim Glock. Kubica had stretched out a 15 second lead at the front, and took the win. On the last lap, Webber spun but managed to continue to the chequered flag.



An unusual and fabulous podium to see: Kubica, Heidfeld and Coulthard, with the remaining points positions going to Glock, Massa, Trulli, Barrichello and Vettel.

Pete left a final thought on Sidepodcast.com: “Good for you, Robert! Congrats to BMW, and lets not forget Peter Sauber!”

Championship

Kubica not only took the win, but also takes the lead in the driver’s championship, thanks to both Hamilton and Raikkonen’s non finish. He leads with 42 points to Hamilton’s 38. Massa has leapfrogged Kimi to also have 38 points, with his team mate on 35. Heidfeld has 28.

Ferrari retain their lead on the constructors, but only just. They have 73, to BMW’s 70. Then McLaren have 53, with Red Bull and Toyota on 21 and 17 respectively.

Conclusions

Let’s start with Renault, who had DNFs for both their drivers. Alonso had very little to say about his day, just that it was a missed opportunity and he was very disappointed. Piquet said the race was hectic, but he had problems with his brakes – that seems to be a familiar issue around Canada.

Toyota had a good day though, with Glock in 4th and Trulli in 6th. Glock secures his first points of the year, despite saying it was a tough race. He lost places on the start, and then destroyed his tyres trying to regain them, and in the final stages of the race he had to hold off a charging Massa. Trulli is happy with his day, but says his main problem actually was pre-qualifying, when he changed the setup. He says: “This cost me because I was unable to push as hard as I wanted Towards the end of the race I had some trouble with the brakes. Then I was unfortunate that Timo made a small mistake late on. When he came back on the track I had to lift off and Massa got past. Still, in the end it’s great to score points and I am happy for everyone.”

Force India are the only other team to have both drivers not finish, and both attribute it to just very difficult days. Sutil said he had a gearbox problem, whilst Fisichella said he had a number of problems that culminated in his retirement.

At the other end of the standings, Coulthard says: “I’m delighted to get a podium for the team, they’ve had a lot of work on at the previous races and back at base. You can expect some unusual results here, so we fuelled it long; but we expected the incidents would occur on track, not in the pit lane.” Webber was on a two stop strategy, and attributes his 12th place to starting out of position after qualifying.

Massa doesn’t really know how he’s feeling after a tough day: “It’s hard to express my feelings after a race like this. On the one hand, I am disappointed because, without my refueling problem, I could have been fighting for a place on the podium. On the other hand, I am happy to have brought home four points.” Of course, we all want to hear from Raikkonen about the incident. The investigation from the stewards resulted in Rosberg and Hamilton getting ten place grid drops for the next race. Raikkonen says: “There’s not much I can say. My race was ruined by Hamilton’s mistake. Obviously, anyone can make mistakes, as I did two weeks ago in Monaco, but it’s one thing to make a mistake at two hundred per hour but another to hit a car stopped at red light. I am not angry because that doesn’t achieve anything and does not change my result!”

There’s always two sides to every story, of course, and Hamilton says: “By the time they'd come to a halt, it was too late for me to avoid them. It's just unfortunate when stuff like this happens, but I have no argument with the stewards.” Heikki also didn’t have a great day, and said he had a lot of problems with graining on the tyres.

For Toro Rosso, Vettel feels pretty upbeat with his 8th place finish, saying: “First of all I have to thank the mechanics who did a great job to rebuild the car after my mistake on Saturday morning. They did an unbelievable job, working through the night to get the work done.” He went on to say he had a problem with his one pit stop, but is still happy to pick up a point. Bourdais knew he was having a bad weekend before the race began: “The race went much as I expected it, because of the really bad track conditions from the mid point on. In these conditions, some guys did really well, like Sebastian, but I could not do anything with the car.” Hey, come on Bourdais, at least you finished!

Williams had a poor day, considering how much promise it looked like they had during the early part of the weekend. Rosberg hints that the start of the race was good for him, but obviously the pit lane incident ruined everything. He had to pit again and then was so far back that it was a midfield battle once again. Nakajima also had trouble with his front wing, but does say: “When I was following Jenson, it seemed as if he got on the marbles in the middle of the hairpin and lost traction, and I couldn’t avoid him.” I think a lot of drivers had trouble with traction coming out of the hairpin.

Barrichello had a good day, considering everything: “I’m pleased with the two points today, particularly as we thought our chances of a points finish were slim when we started the weekend. It was a very tough race and I have not been feeling well since yesterday due to a cold, which made it an even tougher physical challenge.” Button was hoping to be able to overtake from the back of the grid, but says the safety car really ruined his race strategy. He’s happy to just forget this weekend and move on.

And finally, Kubica takes his maiden win. He celebrates, saying: “I’m very happy at having won the first race for the BMW Sauber F1 Team. I’m also happy for Poland and all my fans.” He goes on to say what a difficult race it was, but we know all about that already! Heidfeld is gracious, but you can tell he wishes he’d taken the first BMW win. “Congratulations to Robert for winning this race, which he really deserved! I made a poor start and lost a position to Rubens Barrichello. Fortunately I was able to pass him, and from this moment on I was one of the fastest cars on the track.” Still a BMW 1-2 is nothing to be sniffed at.

So, there you have it – an incredible race, full of incidents, strategy, and overtaking, and not a marmot in sight. Next on the calendar is France, so until then, leave your thoughts about the race on 0121 28 87225, and I’ll see you on sidepodcast.com.