



## F1 Digest – Britain GP

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### *Intro*

This is the final F1 Digest for the British Grand Prix weekend. We've covered the ups and downs of Free Practice, but it all culminated today in a stunning race. Let's take a look at what happened.

### *The Race*

We were in the stands and I can tell you it was both very cold and very wet. The rain was on and off throughout the day although as the cars lined up on the grid, it was off. The temperature was 17 degrees on track, whilst the air was 16.

Kovalainen got a good start from the front of the grid, but Webber didn't, and he immediately lost a couple of places off the line. Hamilton stormed through to squeeze in behind his team mate, and Raikkonen also crept up behind the McLarens. Kovalainen and Hamilton touched wheels around the first corner, which sent Kovi into a bit of wobble. He had to go defensive to keep Hamilton behind him and for the first lap, he managed to do so. Scott summed up the start for us over on Sidepodcast.com: "Lap 1 and 5 people get it wrong! Brilliant. Great start from Lewis though, just awesome!"

Things were about to get worse for Webber, as he spun on a damp patch and had to wait for the cars to pass before he could recover. The spray kicked up by the cars was immense, and it's no wonder we had more spinning. Nakajima had an off, then Massa spun 180 degrees to face the oncoming traffic. Coulthard and Vettel also both ended up in the gravel trap, both their races over at such an early stage of the afternoon.

Alonso had passed Piquet and was pushing Heidfeld for fourth, taking it easily on the second lap. Hamilton was still pushing Kovalainen for the lead, whilst Massa spun on the start/finish straight. That's two spins in two laps, and yes, we are keeping count. Although in the Live Comments, Poppy looked on the bright side: "massa when is is good he is great but really twice??? mind you saving it twice I suppose last is better than out"

Hamilton was clearly faster than Kovalainen and took a superb overtaking manoeuvre on the fourth lap. He braked later and took the lead. For a moment it looked like Kovi could at least challenge back, but Hamilton began to pull away almost instantaneously.

Webber started to make his way through the field after his earlier spin, and took both Bourdais and Sutil in the same lap. More overtaking at the front, as Raikkonen got past Kovalainen after the McLaren had a quick spin. Sutil had more of a spin, losing the car under braking and flying off the track, narrowly missing Bourdais behind him. He was out of the race and his car was retrieved under yellow flags. Meanwhile, Webber got past Barrichello and started to chase down Button. Massa was also racing through the field, getting into 16<sup>th</sup> place.

Kovalainen was the first to come in for a scheduled pit stop, and he came out just in front of Kubica, with Webber and Alonso coming in soon after. Hamilton and Raikkonen came into the pit lane together, so it was a direct battle between the two, but Hamilton managed to stay in front of the Ferrari. Lou noticed something important over on Sidepodcast.com: "no new tyres for Kimi.... but new tyres for Lewis, we will see which is th better strategy"

Nakajima had a complete spin, and then some, ending up facing the wrong way on the track. He recovered though, and continued on his way. Meanwhile, at the front, Raikkonen was struggling to make his tyres work. He'd kept on the same tyres as the first stint, whilst Hamilton had changed his, and the gap between the pair was increasing every



lap. In fact, Raikkonen began to fall back towards Kovalainen, who took the inside line round the corner to get past the Ferrari. Heidfeld also managed to sneak past.

Elsewhere on the track, Fisichella found himself stuck in the gravel, just as his team mate had earlier. Massa was having a miserable time, presumably for similar reasons as Raikkonen, both Ferraris seriously struggling with their tyres. The rain had begun to fall again, just ahead of the second round of pit stops. Again, Heikki was in first, a good clean stop.

When the Honda's came in, a problem with Barrichello's pit stop saw him hold up Button, the pair of them queuing for the pit box. Out on track, Piquet aquaplaned off the track, and a few corners later, simply slid off the track into the gravel. Hamilton ran wide, but had such a huge margin over everyone else it made very little difference. Kubica also took a little trip across the grass, whilst Massa spun again. That's three, by the way, and he also possibly hit a hare. To give Massa his due, Raikkonen was also struggling, and lost the track twice in very short succession.

When Hamilton came in for his stop, the rain was easing off, and McLaren decided to stick with the intermediate tyre. As Webber joined the long list of drivers spinning off track, the sun came out and things brightened up a little. The track was still seriously wet, and the difference in tyres was evident. Barrichello was on extreme wets, and slipped past Alonso easily for fourth – apparently also half a minute faster than the quick lap times from Hamilton, on intermediates.

Kubica spun off into the gravel. Rosberg and Trulli made contact, with Nico having to return to the pits for a new nose. Button also headed off track to see his race come to an end as well. Glock had a beautiful spin but continued on. With all this confusion, Barrichello had crept up into second place, but the problem we saw in the pit stop meant that no fuel had gone into the car, and he had to come in once more. Although, MattW questioned this, saying: "He has only had one stop right? If no fuel went in, then he would have run out by now?"

Massa spun again – four times now – and moments later Webber did the same thing in the same place. Kovalainen had a spin, elsewhere on the track, and, er, yea, Massa again. Raikkonen, meanwhile, was trying to get past Alonso, with the Renault defending as much as he could for fourth~, but of course, Kimi made the most of a slipstream opportunity and took the position.

Thankfully, things settled down for the last few laps, and all Hamilton had to do was bring it home safely. Rich was happy with what he saw: "Lewis had a spectacular drive. Hopefully that will silence the many critics! Sorry but Kovy still fails to impress for me at least!" Heidfeld completed the race in second, and despite the problems, Barrichello took the third step of the podium. Earlier on in the comments, Dom hit the nail on the head with: "Ross Brawn is a bloody genius!"

The remaining points went to Raikkonen, Kovalainen, Alonso, Trulli and Nakajima.

### *Championship*

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At this stage in the championship, it is amazing to find that we have three drivers at the top all with the same points. Hamilton leads Massa and then Raikkonen, but they are all on 48 points. Kubica is still in contention with 46, and Heidfeld is back on 36.

Ferrari still head up the constructors with 96 points, BMW in second on 82 and McLaren have 72. Toyota and Red Bull squabble for fourth and fifth, on 25 and 24 points respectively.

### *Conclusions*

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It all looked so promising for Red Bull at the start of the day, and it just didn't work out. Webber finished in 10<sup>th</sup>, disappointingly, and says: "I had to let the field go past, so it was clear to spin back round. After that it was about making the right call for the right conditions. It was a difficult day to go car racing and it just didn't go our way today." Coulthard says the visibility was really bad, and he also apologises to Red Bull for the incident with Vettel as it saw two of the sister cars going out.

Still, even though it was a bad day for Red Bull it was worse for Force India. Neither car finished, and Sutil said: "At the time of my spin, the track was starting to dry and it was tricky to tell where the wet patches were. This is what happened in my case – I just went on one of these puddles and aquaplaned off completely." Fisichella had a similar incident, although his problem was with the tyres: "I just lost control going through the complex because there was a lot of graining on the tyres as a result of the heavy fuel load we were carrying to be as flexible with the weather. The grip level was absolutely zero and I spun."

Trulli said he had a good race, although he was hoping for more than two points. Aquaplaning was a specific problem and he puts it down to the tyre decisions – which it appears to have been an issue for most of the drivers out there. Glock had that problem and is therefore happy to put this race behind him and look forward to Hockenheim.

For BMW, Heidfeld is happy with his day. From 5<sup>th</sup> on the grid to 2<sup>nd</sup>, he attributes his success to making the right decisions and doing everything right. Talking of the weather, Heidfeld said: "We were expecting a small shower, but when I drove down Hangar Straight and saw a black wall in front of me, I thought I should expect more than that!" He also said the hardest part of the race was lapping other cars because of the differences in tyres. Kubica's race can be summed up in one simple sentence from him: "I couldn't keep the car in a straight line."

Piquet spun off and is disappointed, saying the car was good and Renault had a strategy that would have got them some good points. Alonso picked up a few in 6<sup>th</sup>, and believes they could have done better as well, but is happy to take anything they can get.

Bourdais says the problems weren't just limited to a wet track: "It was very tough at the start as I couldn't see because the water wasn't clearing off my visor. It's the first time I've encountered this problem." Vettel said that once he was in the gravel, he tried to get pushed out, but once he had left the car he realized that it was much too deep.

Nakajima seems to have a different opinion of the race to everyone else – saying: "It was enjoyable out there today, although a little hard to control the car in the opening and closing stages." I don't think anyone else, bar Lewis, would say it was fun out there. Team mate Rosberg immediately disagrees, starting his thoughts with: "It was pretty difficult out there today." He felt he was going well until he ran into the back of Glock, so another driver happy to put today behind him and move on.

Hamilton in fact, sits on both sides of the fence, saying it was the hardest but also one of the best race he's ever been in. Kovalainen graciously congratulates Lewis and is relatively happy to have spun twice and still picked up some points for the constructors.

Barrichello can pinpoint exactly where the race turned in his favour. "It's a great feeling to be back on the podium today after such an exciting race where the weather conditions really helped us to get the best out of the car. The most important decision of the race for us was switching to the extreme wet tyre when the heavy rain started to fall at half distance." Button sums up his day by just calling it a crazy race.

We'll finish with Ferrari who were surprisingly struggling throughout the whole weekend. Raikkonen finished 4<sup>th</sup> and says: "I am disappointed but I'm equally aware that things could have been much worse. We had the possibility to



win the race but we made a mistake at the first pit stop, keeping the same set of tyres, because we expected the track conditions to improve.” Massa knows what he has to do: “This Silverstone weekend is one to be wiped out.” I know many, many people, Massa, who will disagree with you.

That’s all for the British GP. F1 Digest will return with a preview for the German Grand Prix, and until then I will see you over on Sidepodcast.com.

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