



## F1 Digest - Germany Qualifying

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### Intro

Welcome to F1 Digest. We're well into the German Grand Prix weekend now, and so far it has looked like McLaren have the upper hand. Stay tuned today while we talk about qualifying, and we'll see who ends up on top.

### Free Practice 3

Friday was a wet day at Hockenheim, but Saturday dawned nice and dry. There was talk of rain in the future, but for the start of the session, the air temperature was 21 degrees C and the track temperature at 23.

Big surprise, Fisichella was the first man out, but Alonso and the two McLarens were also on track pretty early. Most put in an installation lap, and Button put in the first benchmark with two Toyotas behind him.

Bourdais posted a new fastest time, but then struggled to keep his car on track, whilst Vettel stayed on the tarmac to beat his team mate to the top spot. Hamilton's first lap saw him fastest, but Vettel wasn't having any of it, and shaved five hundredths of a second off the time. In the live comments on Sidepodcast.com, Dank was expecting good things from the Toro Rossos: "Wouldn't surprise me if they did quite well this weekend. Their straight-line speed is faster than Red Bull's around this circuit."

When Kovalainen emerged, he hit the top spot easily, whilst Raikkonen could only manage fifth. Piquet slipped into sixth and on his next lap took third. Massa ran wide at the last corner, but still managed to cross the line in second.

Whilst the drivers at the top weren't really a surprise – except, perhaps, for Vettel – it was more of a conundrum why BMW were down in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. We know Heidfeld isn't known for headline-grabbing but this seemed to be pushing it a bit far. Kubica, in fact, was really struggling, saying his car was pulling to one side. He returned to the pit lane.

With ten minutes to go, there were just two Hondas and Trulli out on track, but this was only the calm before the dash-for-glory storm. Massa was leading, and Hamilton looked good to nab the top spot, but he ran wide towards the end of his lap, and it all went wrong. Kovalainen fared better though, posting the fastest time, with Massa unable to match it.

Sutil had a massive slide off into the gravel, but managed to save it and continue on, although he didn't really look like troubling anywhere near the top. The session finished with Kovalainen on top, then Massa, Hamilton, Alonso and Vettel.

### Quali 1

Between the end of Free Practice and the start of qualifying, temperatures rose slightly, with air at 23 degrees C, and track at 27. As the lights went green it was still dry, but the dark clouds in the sky kept the weather men predicting rain.

Rosberg was the first to leave the pit lane, followed by Bourdais and both Force India cars. Raikkonen was also out early, an unusual tactic for the Ferrari, although Lou left a thought on Sidepodcast.com about this: "didn't ITV say that Ferrari use Q1 a bit like a practise session, and if Kimi isn't happy with the car it does makes sence." Vettel easily beat Rosberg's first benchmark, and Raikkonen couldn't match it. Even Webber managed to get past the Ferrari and took the top spot.



Massa's first lap saw him at the top, and finally Raikkonen managed to slide into P1, however, Massa snatched it right back. Meanwhile, Hamilton messed up during his lap, and still managed to go quicker. The BMW boys took to the track, and Kubica slipped into fifth, only to be pushed down by Heidfeld. Still, much better than the morning's effort.

When the final flying laps were completed, Massa managed to hit the top, with Raikkonen and Hamilton behind him. We lost: Piquet, Nakajima, Fisichella, Sutil and Barrichello.

### Quali 2

The second session began, but it may as well not have done, as it was four minutes before anyone left the garage. It was Raikkonen, who is breaking all kinds of perceptions by heading out early in the session again. Massa was close behind him, and actually got the best time of the two. Scott commented on Sidepodcast.com: "Ferrari must be desperate if they've got both cars out first."

Glock slipped into third, Hamilton first and Kovalainen fourth. Coulthard was on his second hot lap, but decided to abort the attempt and settled for ninth for the time being.

With just five minutes of the session left, BMW still hadn't set a time, but headed out to make their mark. Hmm. Heidfeld 10<sup>th</sup> and Kubica 7<sup>th</sup>. Oh dear.

Bourdais was struggling with his tyres, weaving about the track to try and warm them up, and he barely got halfway through his last attempt at a flying lap before making a mistake and running wide. Lap ruined. Team mate Vettel, however, managed to squeeze into 8<sup>th</sup>. Kubica also improved to fifth, whilst Heidfeld couldn't make the cut.

When the timer ran out, Hamilton was fastest, in front of Massa and Kovalainen, whilst Glock, Heidfeld, Rosberg, Button and Bourdais all dropped out.

### Quali 3

More waiting around before anyone decides to make a break for it, and Quali 3 gets going with Trulli. He was swiftly followed by pretty much everyone else, and Raikkonen made the first mistake of the session by running really wide. He tried another lap and posts the fastest time. Not for long, though, as Massa came out and beat it by eight tenths of a second. Pinxit visited the Live Comments for the first time today, and said: "Thought Kimi may have been sandbagging again, but it appears not..."

Kovalainen also made a few mistakes on his lap, meaning Hamilton posted the second fastest time. He was then pushed down by Alonso.

In the dying moments of the session, as everyone was out there giving it all they had, Raikkonen seemed to have ironed out some of the problems with his car and slipped into second. However, Kovalainen pushed him down, Hamilton took pole, then Trulli and Alonso both slotted into fourth and fifth. That left Raikkonen nowhere. Corey commented on Sidepodcast.com: "Once again we see Trulli the one lap specialist but Hamilton was flying."

The final grid positions were: Hamilton, Massa, Kovalainen, Trulli, Alonso, Raikkonen, Kubica, Webber, Vettel and Coulthard.

Finally, Scott summed up today's action for us: Great laps: Hamilton, Trulli and Alonso. Must do better: Glock (2010 world champion, apparently), Heidfeld, Bourdais, Piquet, Barrichello and Fisichella. Hmm... there were quite a few drivers who put in less than stellar performances today."



## Conclusions

Force India take up the bottom two places on the time sheets, and Sutil is disappointed, saying he thinks they could have done better. Fisichella says: "We did three runs today, and on my fastest lap I hit some traffic in the last sector and couldn't record the time I think we could have done round here." When, oh when, will they break that goal of getting into Q2?

The Williams drivers both missed out on getting into their desired qualifying session, but for Rosberg it was the third, whilst Nakajima couldn't get out of Quali 1. He said: "Unfortunately today I don't think I managed to get everything out of the car in the last lap, especially in sector three where I realised I was being too conservative. Because it was so tight at the end of Q1 today, it cost me quite badly..."

Trulli is satisfied with his 4<sup>th</sup> place finish, putting it down to a car that's handling well and a good performance. He knows that battling with Ferrari and McLaren is going to be tough, but is hoping for good things from the race tomorrow. Glock feels his qualifying wasn't too bad, but his last lap just wasn't good enough.

Webber isn't particularly impressed with 8th on the grid: "We've got a bit of work to do tomorrow I think. This has been one of the harder circuits for us, in terms of getting the car balance set up correctly. It normally comes together a little easier than it has done this weekend." Coulthard puts his messy lap down to the added fuel in Q3, which caused over and understeer depending on which tyre he was on.

Kubica says qualifying today wasn't easy: "In Q1 one of the Force India cars blocked me on my quick lap. As a result, I only finished the session on position 14 and nearly did not make it to Q2. I was satisfied with Q2 but due to the additional fuel load in Q3 I faced some problems with the balance of the car. Let's hope that good luck returns for tomorrow's race." Heidfeld is also disappointed, saying that one of his laps went wrong because of tyre issues, but the other was all down to him.

For Toro Rosso, let's hear from Giorgio Ascanelli, he says: "I had a feeling in Vettel's second run in Q1 that it might not be enough to get into Q2 and I was proved wrong by seven hundredths of a second. I didn't believe the kid could do it, so I took the decision to send him out on a second set of Option tyres, which we could have done with at the end of Q3. I am also glad that Bourdais has found a positive way to move forward. If he had not run wide, he could have been higher up." Bourdais himself said he locked up the wheels for no apparent reason. It's called a mistake, Seb.

Alonso lines up 5th on the grid and was clearly not expecting to find any pace: "Our performance today is a nice surprise because we still had some doubts this morning and the first two parts of qualifying were not easy, and the field was very closely matched, as Nelson found out." Yup, Piquet definitely struggled with some traffic: "During my lap, Vettel was in front of me, which unsettled me a little, although the FIA felt that he did not impede me."

Raikkonen remains optimistic: "in qualifying, we went reasonably well with low fuel, but in the final session, the car was not as good. Clearly sixth place is not satisfying and tomorrow we won't be in for an easy time, but it's definitely not the end of the world." Whilst Massa simply says he's very pleased, although of course, pole position would have been even better.

For Honda, Button feels he got the best out of the car that he could, and says that graining on the tyres was a serious problem for them today. Barrichello is keeping his hopes alive with some fond memories: "The last time that I started 18th on the grid at Hockenheim I won the race in 2000, so you never know what might happen tomorrow! Realistically the car was just not quick enough in a very competitive midfield today."



Pole sitter Hamilton starts his post-qualifying quotes with: “What a lap!” He’s either surprised, or impressed with himself, most likely both. He said the wind was an added problem today, and that sometimes it was hard to stay on the racing line. Kovalainen knows all about that, having spent plenty of time off the track. “On my final run I did a little bit of rallycrossing at the last corner. Taking that into account, it was a good lap.”

We saw a few good laps today, and some of the top drivers struggling, so if conditions remain the same, we will no doubt have another excellent race tomorrow. I will be back with a roundup of events post-race, and in the meantime you can join us on Sidepodcast.com for discussions and live commenting. See you there.

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