



## F1 Digest - Australia GP

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### *Intro*

Welcome to F1 Digest from Sidepodcast, your race weekend coverage of the Australian Grand Prix. Thursday we released the preview show, Friday was all about Free Practice, Saturday qualifying and today is what it has all been building up to – the race. Let's get started.

### *The Race*

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This year, the race started 90 minutes later than in it has in previous years, meaning the temperature was slightly warmer than we've seen before, and likely to only get hotter. During the pre-race build up, the track temperature hit 51 degrees centigrade, a high place to start from.

Adrian Sutil did more damage than we originally realised in Qualifying yesterday, when he spun right at the end of the second session. With major damage to the chassis, Sutil had to start from the pitlane. The rest of the cars, meanwhile, lined up on the grid and headed off on their formation lap.

The first corner of the first race without traction control was expected to be a good one, and as the lights went out and the cars burst into life, it didn't disappoint.

The front runners made it through safely, Hamilton, Kubica and Kovalainen all passed without incident. Raikkonen made up a ton of places to arrive in 8<sup>th</sup> position. Sato and Piquet also had great starts. However, in the mid-field, things got a bit mixed up. Massa spun off in to the wall, damaging his front wing, although there was no contact with anyone else. He dived into the pits for a new nose. Drivers who did suffer contact include Fisichella, Vettel, Davidson, Button and Webber, who all retired on the first lap.

The safety car came out for a single lap, and by the end of the second, we were back racing again.

Hamilton began to pull away from Kubica, whilst Massa was dead last, having changed his strategy and visited the pits again for more fuel.

Sutil also visited the pitlane, but drove straight into his garage and out of the race. Out on track, Nakajima overtook Piquet for 14<sup>th</sup> place.

Raikkonen was stuck behind Barrichello, fighting for 7<sup>th</sup> place, and although he was clearly faster than the Honda, he seemed unable to get past. In the other Ferrari, Massa was having more success, overtaking Piquet for 15<sup>th</sup> and then Nakajima for 14<sup>th</sup>.

Lap 18, Hamilton pitted, passing the lead to Kovalainen. Raikkonen finally managed to dive past Barrichello and put his foot down. Massa got stuck behind Sato, who was sitting happily in the mid-field but posting lap times that should see him at the back.

Rosberg and Heidfeld came into the pits at the same time, and following some questionable timing by the BMW lollipop man, Heidfeld managed to come out in front.

Trulli pulled into his pit box, but climbed out of his car, citing battery troubles.



Kovalainen pitted from the lead and emerged in front of Raikkonen, leaving the top runners as Hamilton, Kovalainen, Raikkonen, Kubica, Heidfeld and Alonso.

Massa attempted an overtaking manoeuvre on David Coulthard, who either couldn't see him or felt he was ahead. Coulthard hit the wheel of the Ferrari, flew off the track and the Red Bull shattered into a million pieces, scattering debris all over the tarmac.

The safety car came out. Raikkonen and Alonso, who hadn't pitted yet, were told to save as much fuel as possible until the pit lane reopened. Raikkonen made an abortive attempt to enter the pit lane but managed to save it by cutting across the grass.

At the end of Lap 30, the safety car came in, and Raikkonen was all over Kovalainen to try and get past. After a few unsuccessful attempts, he tried one last time and overcooked it, flying straight on at Turn 3, spraying gravel everywhere and narrowly missing the wall. He pitted on the next lap. Meanwhile, Massa added to Ferrari's woes by gradually slowing to a halt and retiring from the race with engine problems. Piquet was also out with clutch-related problems, and Sato pulled off track leaving only 11 drivers still in the race – Raikkonen being the 11th.

Hamilton began to extend his lead once again, Kovalainen was tucked up safely behind him, with Heidfeld and Rosberg following.

Continuing Raikkonen's bad day, he attempted to pass Timo Glock, but touched the grass with a wheel and spun off. He managed to recover and continue. Glock, however, ran wide and over the grass. The Toyota was launched in the air, hit the earth with a mighty bump and spun a couple of times before coming to rest next to the wall. A high speed crash, but Glock was okay, if a little winded.

The safety car was deployed once again. Barrichello pitted for fuel, knowing that he would face a penalty, but preferring that option to simply pulling to a stop out on track. The lollipop man made a mistake though, allowing the Honda to leave whilst the fuel rig was still attached. Several of the pit crew were pulled over, and a couple of minor injuries sustained. Barrichello received a ten second stop go penalty for pitting illegally.

At the end of lap 48, the safety car pulled into the pitlane, followed by Barrichello to serve his penalty and Nakajima and Kubica both missing bits of their front wing. It appears that Nakajima ran into the back of Kubica, and unfortunately for BMW, the Pole climbed out of his car with his race over.

During the confusion on track, Alonso managed to get past Kovalainen, and began the hunt for Bourdais.

Raikkonen's Ferrari engine started to sound really sick, and he eventually pulled to a stop out on track. Moments later, Bourdais' also pulled over with smoke pouring from his engine, another made by Ferrari.

Kovalainen began to pressure Alonso for 4<sup>th</sup> place, he managed to pass him around the corner, but on the following straight, slowed right down and allowed Alonso to regain the position. It turns out that Kovalainen accidentally hit the pit lane speed limiter as he was trying to remove a tear off from his visor.

Hamilton took the chequered flag, followed by Heidfeld, Rosberg, Alonso, Kovalainen, Barrichello and Nakajima. Only seven finishers out of the 22 cars taking part.



Post race, we found out that Bourdais was classified eighth, even though he had officially retired from the race. The stewards then announced that Barrichello was disqualified for his disastrous pit stop under the safety car. Not only was the pit stop illegal, and his pit crew injured, Barrichello also ran through the red light at the end of the pit lane. This promotes Nakajima to 6<sup>th</sup>, Bourdais 7<sup>th</sup> and Raikkonen picks up one point.

The stewards also revealed that Nakajima will receive a ten place grid drop for Malaysia, after the incident with Kubica.

### *Your Comments*

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Dan Brunell: "I wonder who Massa is going to blame this on."

SteveintheUK: "Does DC not know that his car has mirrors? Its not the first time he has done this."

Scott Dryden: "Another safety car then. I was looking at some stats on f1punter.com, and it would appear as if safety cars crop up more than average at Melbourne. I seem to recall seeing evens offered on the chances of at least one safety car period. Should have gone for that, as there was clearly some value there."

Michael Roberts: "Is anyone going to finish?"

Nelson: "You know it's a crappy race when you don't finish the race and you still get points."

Sidepodcastfan: "Well done Vodafone/MclarenMercedes! Glad to see Ron Smiling again."

Steven Roy: "Lewis just said something incredible. The car was a dream to drive compared to what we had last year."

Arun : "F1 couldn't get more enjoyable. Only 8 finishers, sad that none of the 6 Ferrari's engines finished."

### *Conclusions*

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McLaren couldn't have asked for a better start to the season. The only slight disappointment for the team is that they were headed for a 1-2 finish, but Kovalainen was caught out by the safety car, and of course, by Alonso.

Briatore is happy with his team, saying they couldn't have a better omen for the rest of the season. Obviously, Piquet's retirement was not so good, but all involved attribute it to be a learning experience and turn their attention to Malaysia instead.

The Ferrari boys admit that this is a horrible start to their championship campaign, with neither managing to see the distance. Stefano Domenicali insists that they aren't going to get too emotional about it, and it will all just have to start again next time round. Massa has said that Coulthard simply closed the door on his overtaking manoeuvre and that's what caused the crash.

The Red Bull driver disputes that, though, saying that Felipe was too far back and not alongside enough to attempt a pass. He says: "I screwed up last year when I tried a speculative move on Alex, but I took full responsibility for it and I would expect Felipe to do the same today."

Honda were yet another team to struggle, Jenson barely got off the grid, and Barrichello was disqualified. However, they are buoyed by the performance of the car in both qualifying and the race, a vast improvement on last year's dismal package.



Both Vettel and Bourdais feel disappointed with their race. Vettel stalled on the grid, which meant he was right in the middle of the first corner mayhem. Bourdais meanwhile worked really hard all afternoon to see his race go literally up in smoke. However, he will get two points for Toro Rosso, which isn't the worst debut you could have. All four Super Aguri and Force India drivers are massively disappointed as none of them managed to finish. As ever, they are looking forward to Malaysia next week to try and make a better go of it.

That sums up a crazy weekend of racing. We barely have time to relax before it starts all over again. On Thursday, we'll be previewing the Malaysian Grand Prix. I hope F1 Digest has been of some use to you over the race weekend. As ever, your feedback is important and I'd love to hear your thoughts on these shows and more importantly on the race. Visit Sidepodcast.com to leave your comments, call our voicemail on 0121 28 TRACK or email me [christine@sidepodcast.com](mailto:christine@sidepodcast.com).

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