



F1 Digest – Germany GP

Intro

Welcome to the final F1 Digest show for the German Grand Prix weekend. Having covered all of Free Practice and qualifying, it all comes down to the race. Let's take a look at what happened.

The Race

All previous rain predictions were very, very wrong as it was nice and sunny going into Sunday afternoon. The track was at 31 degrees C, whilst the air temperature hovered around 22.

It was a clean start, just a few of the back markers running wide. Massa had a good start, pressured Hamilton into the first corner, but the McLaren soon scampered away into the distance. The Ferrari then came under pressure himself from Kovalainen, managing to keep the position, for now. Kubica had a relatively good start, but when they got to the hairpin, he managed to take both Trulli and Alonso and was in fourth from seventh by the end of the first lap.

Alonso was trying to get past Trulli, and so desperate was he, that he allowed Raikkonen to come up and overtake him from behind. The Ferrari then set after the Toyota.

Hamilton was stretching out an early lead, he was just super-fast. Alianora left a comment on Sidepodcast.com: "Only Massa and Kubica can keep up with Hamilton in sector 1, and nobody can touch him in sector 2." With the McLaren pulling away, the good battles were all happening further back. Coulthard had a poor start and was fighting back through the field, chasing Button in the Honda.

For some reason, Kovalainen appeared to be heading down the order of the field, and then showed on the timing screens as stopped. However, he was running fine. It looked like he had run so wide at a corner that the timing sensors missed him. Phew. Rocket left a note in the Live Comments: "Something very weird just happened to Kovi on the live timing. He went backwards stopped and then was back in the race. I love watching F1 this way."

Meanwhile, Coulthard had managed to get past Button, and Nakajima was at the back of the field, spinning around by himself. By this time Lewis Hamilton was leading by 11 seconds, and he dived into the pitlane on lap 18. He came out in front of Trulli, then lost the place as Trulli got it back. Defensive driving from the Toyota but he came into the pit lane on that lap.

Kubica came in at the same time as Hamilton, whilst Massa pitted a few laps later, and Raikkonen a couple after that. The middle stint of the race was progressing, relatively straightforward, but the live timing screens, for us fans, for commentators and for the teams, were all going a little bit crazy. It showed drivers in the pits when they weren't, and others disappeared off the charts only to reappear as if nothing had happened.

Glock came into the pits, one of the last to do so, from third on the grid, and came back out in 7th, although he was soon overtaken by Vettel. Barrichello came out from his pit stop and immediately got past team mate Button, who didn't seem that happy about it, but couldn't get the place back. Piquet was the only driver not to have come in and he was clearly on a one stop strategy.



Glock spun round on the exit of the last corner, and smashed into the concrete wall. He climbed from the car, gingerly, and holding his back. The safety car was deployed. Scott was watching closely, and commented on Sidepodcast.com: "WOW, HUGE SHUNT! Glock again! Rear suspension failed and straight into the pit wall."

The pack split into two, with half the teams bringing their cars in to the pit lane, and half continuing on. Hamilton didn't go in. Alianora picked up on an important point: "Piquet Jr and Button have a massive stroke of luck, as they have their final respective pit stops just before the Safety Car is called." Coming out of the pit lane, Alonso crossed the white line, but it looked like, and he complained, that Vettel had pushed him out the way to get past. Webber left the pit lane with his engine spewing smoke from the back. He kept on going but the smoke was getting worse and worse.

When the Safety Car came in, Hamilton's lead was drastically reduced, but he had Button – who was lapped - Heidfeld and Piquet between him and Massa. Hamilton had to rebuild his lead over Massa, as the McLaren still had another pit stop to complete. Corey put this very nicely on Sidepodcast.com: "Think that McLaren just lost this race for Lewis. He took on about 2 seconds more fuel than Massa when Lewis last came in so I doubt he has enough time to come back out in front of Massa." And Alex put his sarcastic hat on: "People will need to actually overtake each other! Incredible, what a turn of events."

Alonso was desperate to get past Vettel and locked up heavily going into one of the corners. Raikkonen managed to get past Alonso again, almost an instant replay of the early laps of the race. Rosberg also managed to get past the Renault, and Kovalainen had squeezed past Kubica. Raikkonen put his foot down and got past Vettel in the Toro Rosso as well.

A few laps later, Coulthard was trying to get past Barrichello and the pair came together. Coulthard came in for a new nose, and the Honda had to do the same, although moments later, Barrichello was out of the car, his race over. Hamilton had his scheduled pit stop at the same time and came out a few seconds behind Massa, and also behind his team mate Kovalainen. It wasn't long before Hamilton was past, and, you know, it was obvious that words were had, but it bugs me that they have to be so obvious.

Heidfeld made his final pit stop, just 14 laps from the end, and came out between the two McLarens. Hamilton made up the difference to Massa way too easily, and passed him just the same. Massa didn't have the defensive skills working and Hamilton got past easily. He then went on to do the same for Piquet. It was a walk in the park for him then, to the chequered flag.

Before we got there, though, Alonso had a bit of a moment, as SteveintheUK sums up: "Alonso has just spun, that's going to be a really weird atmosphere in the Renault garage, Piquet comes 2nd, and Alonso just messy up the whole race. I wish we had cameras in the Renault garage."

The final podium was Hamilton, Piquet and Massa, with the rest of the points going to Heidfeld, Kovalainen, Raikkonen, Kubica, and Vettel.

Championship

From three drivers on equal points, the championship has now spread out once again, however the order of the top five hasn't changed from the last race. Hamilton leads on 58 points, Massa has 54 and Raikkonen 51. Kubica is on 48, just ahead of team mate Heidfeld on 41.

Ferrari still lead the constructors championship on 105 points, with BMW behind on 89. McLaren remain in third on 86 points, having closed up to BMW considerably. Toyota have 25, Red Bull have 24, and Piquet's podium brings Renault right up to 23.



Conclusions

Glock was taken to the medical centre and then onwards to hospital. It was assumed he was there for precautionary checks, although he may have to stay in overnight for observation. Toyota team principal Tadashi Yamashina says: "For us the priority is that Timo is okay. At the moment it is too early to determine exactly what the cause of the incident was but of course we are investigating. He was doing a strong race and was looking set for another points finish so it was a real pity." Trulli feels disappointed in his race, because he felt like he had a chance of scoring points but unfortunately finished 9th, just outside of them. It looks like the main problem was the safety car, and I bet that's not the last time we hear that today.

Coulthard said he had a poor start, and battled with Honda's for most of the race. He got past Button okay, but Barrichello and he came together, which was the perfect end to his race. Webber is naturally disappointed with his DNF, saying it was the first mechanical retirement this year and more investigation was needed to find the cause. Christian Horner pipes up saying it was damage to the oil cooler.

Vettel enjoyed himself today: "It was a tough race with a lot of fights but it was big fun. The first lap was hard and close. I tried to pass Kimi, but it didn't work out. I took some time to find a rhythm but I had a wonderful car and could run a great pace. I was disappointed when I saw the Safety Car as I was comfortably holding a points position, but we did the best we could in the situation. I fought to the end and although I was quicker than Jarno I could not pass and then he made a mistake, which brought me back to eighth place. Congratulations to everyone in the team. Eighth with no retirements, means we deserved to finish where we did and I am proud of that." Bourdais is happy that his pace has improved relative to other races, but is still banking on luck to bring him any success.

Meanwhile, at the back of the grid, Button is both frustrated and disappointed. He says the traction was poor and he kept losing grip out of the corners, which obviously made things pretty tough. Barrichello is philosophical about the incident with Coulthard, saying it was just unlucky. He also says his strategy was unlucky as if he could have remained out a few more laps, he would have been able to mimic Piquet's performance.

Heidfeld also benefited from the Safety Car: "Coming fourth from 12th on the grid is a great result. Not making it into the top ten in qualifying meant we were free to choose our fuel load afterwards, and so we went for a rather long first stint. That's why I was able to stay out during the safety car period when almost everybody else was refuelling. That was certainly crucial as I was able to pull away as soon as the traffic was behind me. Before that I couldn't show my true speed as I never had a clear lap." Kubica isn't impressed with his day, saying he was able to match the front runners pace for the first half but at some point he lost all speed and grip, presumably a tyre temperature issue.

Rosberg had a comfortable race, but says a technical problem at the start cost him a place. He says it's not great to go home with no points, but there are positives to be taken from today. Nakajima finished in 15th, having picked up some debris under the car, and struggled with the resulting understeer.

Sutil finished in 16th, and says he's slightly disappointed. He says the pace was there, but one of their pit stops went wrong and then the safety car ruined everything. Fisichella finished in 14th and felt he made progress with his car throughout the race but that mistakes were made both on track and with the strategy. You might say that, as post race, Fisi was dropped from 14th to 17th having unlapped himself from behind the safety car when he wasn't technically allowed to.

Piquet's quote: "I am obviously very happy! After qualifying yesterday I was thinking that my weekend was over, but we opted for an aggressive strategy in the race and the team made some great decisions when the safety car came out. Then I had to concentrate to keep my pace up and look after my tyres as much as possible towards the end of the race. I knew that Lewis was much faster than me, so I did not want to take any pointless risks. This second place



today is a great reward for the whole team." Alonso, meanwhile, is a man of few words: "That was a difficult race for me. I had a bad start and lost several positions. Then I was on the pace but it was difficult to recover. I think that we were simply out of luck today, but we must now look forward and concentrate on the next Grand Prix." Doesn't even congratulate his team mate.

Race winner Hamilton is certainly happy with himself: "I nailed it this afternoon, when the team told me I had to build a 23 second gap in just seven laps, I knew I had to drive over the limit, and I did." He's also happy with Heikki: "I want to say a big thank you to Heikki, who realized I was quicker." Might be dropping your team mate in it, there, Lewis. Kovalainen says he had a difficult race, and lacked the speed, the strategy, and well, everything, really. He's now looking forward to Hungary to try for a podium finish.

For Ferrari, Stefano Domenicali isn't happy: "This was not a good day and there's no point denying it. Our rivals were stronger than us and we have to work out why, without however getting caught up in nebulous and superficial analysis. For the first time this season in a race, we did not have the pace we had expected to run at, with both Kimi and Felipe. We suffered constantly from a lack of grip and, in the final stages, Felipe's brakes were also overheating which complicated still further the management of his car." You've got to love a quote that gets in the word nebulous. Massa says Hamilton's pace was unbeatable and Raikkonen said he struggled all weekend. Naturally, they are all hoping for better things at the next race.

That is pretty much everything from Hockenheim. I hope you enjoyed the race if you saw it, or if not, I hope this episode of F1 Digest helped clear things up. Visit Sidepodcast.com for all the discussions leading up to the next race in Hungary, and go to F1 Minute.com for all the news.

