



F1 Digest - Hungary Preview

Intro

Welcome to F1 Digest, the show where we cover all the action from a race weekend in four separate shows. This time round we're looking at the Hungarian Grand Prix and this is our preview.

Vital Statistics

Date: 3rd August

Circuit: Hungaroring

Length: 4.4km

Laps: 70

2007 Winner: Lewis Hamilton

Last Year

Before we get to how the teams are feeling about this year's race, let's have a quick reminder of what went on in 2007.

[Begin Montage]

Chris: In Free Practice 1, the first 45 minutes saw very little action due to low grip.

Me: Dusty track. Not used very often this circuit, and all the dust collects in a little bowl on the bottom and so it's not a good track to run on.

[Next Clip]

Chris: Then it was time for more pit stops. Alonso came in and he was held up again, for about twenty seconds. Hamilton queued up behind him and the lollipop was raised and Alonso didn't go.

Me: He didn't. He sat there. The lollipop was raised, the team were waving him forward and he just sat.

[Next Clip]

Chris: They gave Alonso a five place penalty, dropping him down to sixth and putting Hamilton on pole. They also said that McLaren would not be getting any constructors points for this race.

[Next Clip]

Chris: So it was actually quite a dull race, after all the excitement.

Me: It didn't really live up to qualifying, did it? I mean, how could it?



[Next Clip]

Chris: The top 8 finishing positions, Hamilton, then Raikkonen, Heidfeld, Alonso, Kubica, Schumacher, Rosberg and Kovalainen.

[Next Clip]

Chris: This year they had Damon Hill, and you know, you kind of expect a certain standard from a driver who should know what they're talking about.

Me: Well, Martin Brundle does a pretty good job.

Chris: Exactly, Damon Hill, not so much.

Me: Hopeless, would that be a fair description?

Chris: I don't think that's harsh enough.

[End Montage]

Insider's View

Now it's time to hear from inside the paddock, first up Alex Wurz tells us about the state of the track.

Alex: In a way, the circuit is changing a lot over the weekend. It starts slippery because there's a lot of dust around but once there's enough rubber coming onto the circuit, lap times increase.

And Sam Michael tells us about strategies at the Hungaroring:

Chris: Hungary presents a bit of a problem because normally, for the tyre degradation and drop off that you have around there, you would normally want to do a 3stop race because it's quite hard on tyres. However, you cannot overtake in Hungary, so when you can't overtake on a track, like Monaco or Hungary, for example, you tend to run more fuel, because if you get someone in front of you that is slower but they have more fuel on board, they can beat you. Because they can just sit in front of you until the pit stop, come in and out in one quick lap and then that's it, you can't get past them. So, Hungary is always very difficult to determine what strategy you're doing because it has high degradation but very hard to overtake.

Wow. I hope the race isn't as boring as he made it sound.

Team Thoughts

The Red Bull family never give out preview press-releases, so we'll get them out the way first. Coulthard is apparently going to be using the same engine for the third race in a row. It's a risky strategy but it makes sense because he wants to adjust his engine schedule so he has a fresh motor for the harder circuits. What are the chances of the Renault engine surviving a third weekend though? Toro Rosso have been super quiet, but were fastest for two of the four Jerez test days. Of course setups were all different, but it's still a testament to their improving competitiveness.

Kubica is looking forward to the race at Hungary, as he is expecting plenty of Polish fans to turn up. It's the nearest thing to a home race for him, and also the track where he raced in his F1 debut. It's pretty special. Heidfeld has a couple of concerns about the race: "If it's dry the circuit gets very dusty particularly at the start of the weekend."



Racing there is exhausting because there aren't any long straights where you can sit back and relax a little bit." He does say he's looking forward to it though, so it can't be that bad.

Hamilton is going into this weekend super-confident, although he is keeping his feet on the ground. "I'm wary about making any strong predictions; yes, we were strong in the last two races, but we encountered difficulties in the two before that, so it's impossible to call it this weekend. All I can say is that our car feels fantastic at the moment and I'm really enjoying driving it: it feels like you can keep fine-tuning it to extract more performance from it, which is a fantastic feeling for any racing driver." Kovalainen explains how to do well at Hungary: "If you end up fighting the car, the heat and the constantly twisting nature of the track mean you'll be exhausted by the end of the weekend. Like Canada, it's also a place that punishes you if you go offline. So driving well at the Hungaroring is all about neatness and patience."

For Toyota, Trulli is looking forward to the race, and says he is usually competitive there, despite being quite unlucky, so he's hoping to finish with some points. Glock is itching to get back into the car for the race, after his accident: "After my incident at Hockenheim I am fine and raring to go. I have had the chance to relax a little at home so I am definitely ready for this weekend. Also, I had a day in the car at Jerez preparing for the Hungarian Grand Prix and that went well."

I think it's fair to say that the Hungaroring isn't the most popular track on the calendar, but Alonso doesn't mind it too much. When asked if there's a special atmosphere at the circuit, he replied: "I don't know really. For me it certainly is because I have some great memories here and the race usually takes place around the time of my birthday. There are always lots of spectators, the people are very kind, and we always enjoy a warm welcome - that is why the paddock enjoys coming back to Budapest each year." Piquet is still reliving his podium finish: "Standing on the podium and seeing all the team so happy felt great and it's a big boost for all of us. I know that I was a bit lucky, but you have to take the luck when it comes your way and towards the end of the race we were strong enough to hold on for second place." He's hoping the momentum will keep him going through Hungary as well.

Nakajima is wary about this weekend as he hasn't driven an F1 car on the track before, but he does believe that it will suit the Williams. Rosberg is also hoping for better results, remembering that they didn't do too badly this time last year.

Sutil is looking forward to Force India being more competitive when their new seamless shift gearbox is introduced, but unfortunately that won't be at Hungary. He says, "This year we have been very close to the other teams, but F1 is so competitive now that just two tenths is the difference between the back row and the midfield. You just can't afford to make any mistakes any more." Fisichella is hoping that their new aero package will make the difference until Valencia, but does mention that qualifying is super important, as there's little chance of any overtaking.

I think this quote from Button sums up everything we need to know about Honda's upcoming weekend: "The Hungarian Grand Prix will always be a special race for me as the venue of my first win in Formula One but obviously I would much prefer to be going back with the chance to challenge for the win again." Barrichello puts a slightly more optimistic spin on his previous achievements: "Our test in Jerez last week was a good opportunity to acclimatise to such conditions, both for the drivers and for the car. I won at the Hungaroring in 2002 and have been on the podium a couple more times since then so I really enjoy returning to Budapest."

Finally we come to Ferrari, and Stefano Domenicali is adamant that there isn't a crisis within the team. I don't know why there should be, but apparently this is the speculation. Domenicali says: "Despite the fact the last two races have been negative for us, the Scuderia is definitely not in crisis. The team is still leading the constructors' championship and theoretically, one of our drivers could again be back at the top of the drivers' classification on Sunday night. We are on a similar points tally to last year, we have won half the races so far and indeed, taken half



the pole positions. Just as we never felt we were unbeatable after our French GP victory, so too, we do not feel all is lost after the British and German events.” Those are wise words. There’s nothing from Raikkonen or Massa, but I think their team principal has said it all for them.

That’s it for today’s show. Join me again tomorrow when we round up all the action from two Free Practice sessions. If you are anywhere near Sidepodcast.com during the sessions, then join in the live commenting fun, as there’s a new and improved page to make commenting much, much easier. I will see you there.

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