



F1 Digest - Hungary Free Practice

Intro

Welcome to the second F1 Digest show for the Hungarian Grand Prix Weekend. After our preview yesterday, it's now time to catch up with everything that happened during Friday Free Practice.

Free Practice 1

This may actually be the duller section of F1 Digest ever, but we will persevere. There are some rumblings of bad weather for this weekend, but it looks like any rain may bypass the circuit. Friday dawned nice and bright, the air temperature was 26 degrees C, and the track about 31.

Fisichella was the first man out, followed by Vettel, and many more setting their installation laps. Both Honda drivers did two laps, before returning to the garage. All but the Ferrari drivers, who by the way, were still arriving quarter of an hour into the session, completed installation laps. Then there was nothing. We waited, and waited, after half an hour, it was Barrichello who finally gave us the blessed relief by hitting the track. Alianora left a comment on Sidepodcast.com: "Note: Rubens is on super-soft tyres. The cars will need all the grip they can get out on that dusty surface."

Our first lap time of the day was amazingly slow, but as Button joined in, followed by Fisichella, Bourdais and others, the times began to drop. Trulli posted a temporary fastest time then spun at the first corner. Raikkonen eventually hit the track, running without the shark fin engine cover, and posted a slow time on his first lap, then improved by seven seconds on his second run. Over on the Live Comments, Junior pondered why Ferrari leave it so late: "Maybe simple thinking, but: if Ferrari are expected to struggle (last two races were a disaster, green track doesn't suit the car,...) then why don't they go out early, do a lot of laps, get ahead, learn something, etc, ...?"

Vettel appeared to have hydraulic problems, and pulled to the side of the track, having only managed to complete 4 laps. Massa went second on his first run, this Ferrari driver with the new engine cover. Glock posted the third fastest time, while team mate Trulli complained that his car was bottoming out. Team mate battles were all over this session, with Kubica way up at the sharp end, and Heidfeld over a second slower, Webber posting fourth and fifth fastest times, whilst Coulthard had yet to post a complete lap time. Two team mates who were close together, but struggling, was the Williams duo, Rosberg and Nakajima down in 18th and 19th at one point. Rocket had a thought on how Red Bull would do this weekend: "Can anyone comment on my deduction that the senior Red Bull team will like this track as they have been talking about how they are no good in a straight line (not enough power) nor on slow corners. But are good on medium speed corners. Isn't that what the Hungaroring is all about? I try to see the world simply."

As the time wore on, Massa was posting the fastest time, and Hamilton was super quick, the pair fighting it out. Raikkonen returned to the garage and had the engine cover fitted, but when he returned to the track he couldn't match Massa's pace.

When the session drew to a close, the fastest five were Massa, Raikkonen, Kovalainen, Hamilton and Alonso.

Free Practice 2

Track temperature remained the same ahead of the second session, whilst the air warmed slightly to 28 degrees. Thankfully, there was more action to be had compared to the morning, both Toro Rossos, Williams, Renaults, Red Bulls and Glock all took to the track pretty much immediately, setting lap times as they went.



Piquet posted an early fastest time, but as soon as Hamilton was on track, that went out the window. Unfortunately for Vettel, he only managed five laps in this session before again pulling off to the side of the track. Alianora commented on Sidepodcast.com: "Not another STOP for Vettel! When will he have a clear session of productive running?" Kovalainen momentarily knocked his team mate off the top spot, but Hamilton took it right back again. In the Live Comments, Lady Snowcat expected nothing less: "This is pretty much the order I was expecting.... I am sure that the Maccas are faster on short runs..." whilst Ryan noticed: "Umm... What happened to the front-end of the McLarens? Are they really running dumbo-flugels?" Yes they are, Ryan. Love that comment, by the way, because it gave me the chance to say Dumbo-Flugel!

Both Massa and Raikkonen were out early, but neither seemed to be able to match the early pace of the McLarens. At first Kimi was ahead of Massa, but soon it was the other way round.

Once the earlier dive for the headlines was complete, it was time for most drivers to start putting in some serious work. The laps clocked up, with Hamilton ahead. A lot of the drivers struggled with graining of their tyres. After the middle stint was over, and the session was drawing to a close, it looked like improved lap times were on the cards again. With so much rubber on the track, Alonso managed to post third, but he must have been pretty annoyed when Piquet jumped into second. On Sidepodcast.com, Steven Roy thought so: "I think Renault could have a bill for a new door when Fernando reaches the motor home." At the very end of the session, Nakajima spun off and backed into the tyre wall, although it wasn't too heavy an impact.

When the timer hit zero, Hamilton was fastest, followed by Piquet, Kovalainen, Alonso and Raikkonen.

Conclusions

Both Red Bull drivers don't say much about their day, just that it was normal, they want to find some more pace, and things will be tight for the rest of the weekend. That's about it.

Rosberg is happy with the improvements the team made: "We didn't start the day quite the way we wanted and had to make several changes throughout the sessions in order to find the best direction for us. We definitely went the right way with the changes, and have made some good progress with the car." Nakajima agrees that the pace was not there this morning, but knows that the improvements to the car have to be matched with his own improvements as well.

Despite finishing 16th and 19th, Button believes that Honda had a good day, saying that they got some useful information about their new rear suspension. He does say he had problems with grip, whilst Barrichello said the balance on the car was also a problem.

Heidfeld is another driver who made changes to his car in the break, but didn't find the results he wanted. He says: "For the very last outing we then made major changes and luckily this proved to be a step in the right direction. I'm happy we tried this because we now know a lot more." Meanwhile Kubica tells us about the normal Friday programme he completed, but nothing about how he feels the car was handling. Judging by some of the radio messages we heard during the sessions, this is not a good sign.

Bourdais spent most of his day getting used to the track: "Not too bad today. This morning was the first time I have driven here since the track configuration was changed, so I was finding out what it's like in a Formula 1 car. That went okay. This afternoon it was the usual programme of evaluating the tyres with different fuel loads." Poor Vettel didn't get a change to feel out the track: "I had hydraulic problems in both sessions. A shame because I lost a lot of track time and Friday's work is very important. I hardly ran at all and therefore we are lacking information which will be a handicap for the rest of the weekend. Obviously, this means the data from the other car will be twice as



important as usual. I will try and learn from Sebastien, but relying on your teammate is never as good as finding your own way around the track. Hopefully I can catch up a bit tomorrow morning.”

Trulli said he had a difficult day due to the dust, and that it’s difficult to trust the data they gathered. Glock felt his day started well, but oddly enough, got harder as the track got more grippy. He’s also passed the FIA medical test so he is confirmed as able to participate in the race.

Hamilton utters the understatement of the day: “The track was very dusty this morning so we took our time before starting our run programme.” He also says the car felt good, and the new aero package made it even better. Kovalainen was concentrating on the tyres rather than the lap times, so finishing the day in 3rd is a promising start to the weekend.

Renault had a really good day if their finishing positions of 2nd and 4th are anything to be believed, but Pat Symonds makes sure we don’t get too excited about it: “On this circuit, where qualifying is particularly important, it’s no secret that our fuel load was slightly lower than normal, but even so we look competitive. Our main focus was to understand the tyres and in particular the effect of graining. All in all it was a successful day for us.”

Force India were testing out their new seamless shift gearbox, although they won’t actually be running it in the race. Both Sutil and Fisichella say they found it easier to use and there were few issues. Sutil felt he encountered traffic, but that the car generally handled well, whilst Fisi said grip was an issue but the track is improving all the time.

Finally, Kimi Raikkonen for Ferrari: “We worked on various set-up options for the car. I also tried the new engine cover, but it is hard to assess it in any detail. The situation is not too bad, the car handles better, but our main rivals seem to be still a little bit quicker than us, even if there is the usual question mark over any difference in the fuel loads.” Massa also pipes up saying that he isn’t comfortable on the super-soft tyre and the harder compound is much more preferable. I guess we will see how the tyres play out in qualifying.

That’s all for today’s F1 Digest. Don’t forget to visit Sidepodcast.com during tomorrow’s qualifying session and join in with the Live Commenting on the brand new auto-refresh page. It worked really well today. Otherwise, I’ll see you back here tomorrow for the next F1 Digest show.