



## F1 Digest - Brazil Free Practice

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### *Intro*

Welcome to F1 Digest brought to you by Sidepodcast. We're covering the Brazilian Grand Prix, and today it's all about Free Practice.

### *Free Practice 1*

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Whilst we were expecting storms and showers, FP1 was only slightly damp. We could even see some sunshine. The air temperature was around 17 degrees C and the track about 22. The Force India boys were the first to hit the circuit, followed by all the others for installation laps. Just the Ferrari's remained in the garage. It took well over twenty minutes before the action got going again, with Piquet the first man to set a benchmark time. He was soon knocked down by Bourdais, Vettel, Rosberg and Glock, as everyone started to make their way back out on track.

Raikkonen left his garage after about half an hour, although decided not to set a time, and ten minutes later, Massa pleased the crowds by joining the fun. Meanwhile, Kovalainen was topping the timesheets, only to be knocked down by teammate Hamilton. Massa slipped into second to split the McLaren's.

It started to rain lightly, and Charlie Whiting declared the session was wet. We started to see the track getting a bit greasy, as Alonso ran wide, and Raikkonen also spun. He waited for a car to pass and continued on his way. At the top, Massa was closing in on Hamilton's time but couldn't quite beat it. Before he could do so, Raikkonen jumped him to second, and next time round, Massa was sliding all over the place, but managed to save it and keep control. As the clock ticked down, Kubica was up to fourth, ahead of Kovalainen, with Alonso just behind.

The battle was clearly between Hamilton and Massa though, with Felipe finally making the breakthrough and taking the top spot. Lewis had one last ditch effort, clearing plenty of space for himself on the outlap, but not managing to get past the Ferrari.

At the end of the session, the fastest five: Massa, Hamilton, Raikkonen, Kubica and Kovalainen.

### *Free Practice 2*

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The temperatures remained exactly the same between sessions, and there was no more rain, despite the looming clouds in the sky. There was no hanging around for FP2, 10 cars hit the track almost instantly, with Alonso getting first dibs at the fastest time.

He was soon jumped by Kubica, Webber and Trulli, with times tumbling. Bourdais took his car for a wander at the first turn, whilst Glock made it a Toyota 1-2. Trulli soon took the top spot back from his team mate, whilst Massa could only manage third, Raikkonen eighth, and Hamilton sixth. Bourdais struggled at the first corner yet again, running very wide.

Coulthard jumped up to third, whilst Massa managed to take P1, only for Trulli to grab it right back again, and then Massa again to take it back. After his initial effort, Alonso was towards the bottom of the timesheets, as was Piquet, the Hondas and surprisingly, Kubica. The BMW however, put in a better lap and jumped up to ninth.

In the last few minutes, Raikkonen moved up to third, but Alonso jumped from 18<sup>th</sup> all the way up to 1<sup>st</sup>, a position that Hamilton couldn't budge him from, due to a lockup on his final flying lap.



When the timer hit zero, the fastest five were Alonso, Massa, Trulli, Raikkonen and Webber.

### *Conclusions*

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Over on Sidepodcast.com, we live commented our way through both sessions, and at the end of the day we had two great summaries:

Alianora offered up: "Quite quiet, Massa great and. Hamilton not-so-great. Engine power asserted itself, Bourdais spun a lot and Force India propped up the timesheets."

Whilst Rubbergoat looked to the rest of the weekend: "Anything could happen from here on. As usual, Friday doesn't tell us much except that the usually fast guys are fast and vice versa. Huge anticipation for tomorrow and the race - as Murray Walker used to say "Anything can happen in F1 and it usually does" - a statement that sums up 2008!"

Now let's move on to how the teams feel their day went, and first up is Williams. Despite running towards the bottom of the timesheets for most of the day, Rosberg finished up 8<sup>th</sup> and Nakajima 10<sup>th</sup>. Nico thinks this is good news: "I think we've shown ourselves to be a little bit more competitive here than we have at other tracks. That doesn't necessarily mean we'll be further up the grid tomorrow, but we might be a little bit closer." Nakajima agrees that their setup progress has been good and now they just need a little bit more work on performance.

BMW finished the day 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> which is no doubt not representative of their pace. Kubica says: "This was a usual Friday and we finished our scheduled programme. We did some basic set-up work and evaluated the different tyre compounds. At the end of both the sessions there was drizzle in some of the corners. However, the few drops did not really influence the grip." Heidfeld felt he was struggling slightly: "After being really unhappy with the balance of the car in the first session, we improved it for the afternoon, but I still find the car difficult to drive."

Coulthard feels that the rain hampered them slightly: It was spitting with rain in the second session, so we took the decision to run a fresh set of tyres early on, just in case it rained towards the end. We haven't achieved the ultimate lap time, but I think we made progress during the day to stabilise the car." Webber agrees that the weather didn't help with the tyres, but overall he was quite happy with the car right from the start, which makes a nice change.

For McLaren, Hamilton says it was a day of two halves: "Our car was blindingly quick this morning despite the cold weather, which made the track feel quite slippery. This afternoon we focused on our race pace - but we were interrupted by the threat of rain and the changeable wind direction. I flat-spotted my tyres on a couple of runs, but I'm positive that the changes we've made will put us in a good position for tomorrow." Meanwhile, Kovi says it was a decent couple of sessions today, and they've got all the data they need to set things up nicely for tomorrow.

Sutil studied the tyres a lot today: "We didn't have any problems today so we could get through our schedule as planned. I was quite happy with my performance and we can see how the tyres are working now. The soft ones seem to be better compared to the medium tyre at the moment." Fisichella, however, is picking up the problems with them: "The whole day we struggled with the grip, when it was dry or wetter. We seem to have problems in particular with graining, even after a couple of laps. My speed on the straight is also relatively low, which means we aren't able to take advantage of the long straight."

The Toyota boys fared very differently today. Trulli ended up 3<sup>rd</sup> overall, which is quite impressive. As he says: "I was ill with the flu yesterday so I took the time to rest in order to help me recover. Today I have been feeling better and I was able to drive with no problems. We had a good Friday session in general, going through the set-up work and looking at tyre choice for the race. We worked on balancing the car and we had some success." Glock finished the day 14<sup>th</sup>, though, and admits: "It was a pretty difficult day for me. This is one of the races I did for Jordan in 2004 so I



have experience of this track. That was a tricky race for me but the track surface is not as bumpy this year. Still, the car felt a bit strange so it's hard to understand where we are at the moment."

Barrichello really enjoyed being at his home track: "It's a real pleasure for me to be racing at Interlagos this weekend, especially in front of the Brazilian fans and my family. We had two straightforward practice sessions with no real issues today however, as we expected, the car is lacking performance." Button mentions the problem with tyres: "Our main focus was trying to get the option tyres to work. Everyone seems to be having a problem with graining on the options so we tried various things to improve their performance over one lap and the long runs." He also points out that an electrical problem cost him some time and running in the morning session.

Massa said that although it's only Friday, he feels like he's got off to a good start, and found a good setup on the car. Raikkonen reveals his aim for the weekend: "To do my own race and help the team reach its objectives and I know what I have to do for that to happen. It will be a tough race on Sunday and you never know what could happen: we have to be prepared for every eventuality."

Toro Rosso are another team with a big gap between drivers. Vettel ended the day 6<sup>th</sup> and says they made some big steps in getting the setup right between the two sessions, whilst Bourdais says: "Generally, it's been a decent day, even if I didn't get the balance right on the option tyre. Most of the day me and Seb were fairly evenly matched until the big gap came when I made a mistake on one quick lap at the last corner."

Piquet feels pretty positive about his day: "I did lots of laps today, which was what I wanted as I needed to find the limits of the circuit. The initial information we have is interesting, but the track was very slippery today and so I think I can still find some more speed and I can still improve the set-up of the car with my engineers." Meanwhile Alonso finished on top, but all he says is that he's glad the day went well and they completed the programme.

That's it for the Free Practice show. We've got one more FP session to go, then it's down to qualifying. Join us on Sidepodcast.com for live commenting if you can, or else I'll be back with the F1 Digest rundown after all the action is completed.