



F1 Digest 2009 – China Preview

Welcome to F1 Digest – China Preview.

Finally, the diffuser row is over, with the FIA Court of Appeal ruling the so-called double decker designs legal. That means Brawn, Williams and Toyota are good to go, and so are we.

Vital Statistics

The Chinese Grand Prix takes place on the 19th April 2009 at the Shanghai International Circuit. The track is 5.5km long which means 56 laps. The current lap record holder is Michael Schumacher with a 1:32.238. Last year's pole position was Hamilton with a 1:36.3 whilst the fastest lap was Hamilton with again a 1:36.3.

2008 in 30 Seconds

The 2008 Chinese Grand Prix was the penultimate round of that season, meaning it was actually only four races ago. Back then, it was all about Hamilton vs Massa, with Lewis heading into the race determined to win. He hadn't stood on the top step since Germany, and taking pole position and a relatively easy victory secured good momentum for the final round of the season. The other two podium places went to Massa and Raikkonen, although Kimi had been much faster and running in second before handing the place to his championship contending teammate.

From the Comments

Scott Woodwiss is happy the Court of Appeal business is done: "Thank goodness this diffuser malarkey seems to be over! At least we can now get back to the racing. China looks like it's going to be a dry weekend all round which means that unlike Malaysia we get to see who is quickest on a dry track without the threat of wet conditions. Brawn and Toyota will still be on a high after their super starts, while BMW looks like they've woken up at last and are taking the fight to the diffuser gang. Red Bull look to have dropped off in pace just a bit, but here's hoping they can bring themselves to the front once again."

RG is also looking ahead to what will happen now the teams have some work to do: "Ah, the diffuser day in the past, the teams skipping along now like nothing had happened. As usual, it will be the 'Diffuser Boys' who will probably get the best results along with Red Bull and if they are lucky, BMW. However, I can't see Brawn winning, with more teams likely to get that diffuser on board there cars very soon, they could be caught up to very quickly by Red Bull, and I wouldn't be surprised if we don't see a championship fight between Brawn and Red Bull very soon. As for the race, I'm going Vettel, Barrichello and Kubica."

Mr C doesn't seem to be a fan of the Shanghai circuit: "The Chinese Grand Prix has come around way too soon. It rarely provides compelling racing and having to suffer the land of the sinking track, twice in six months is just not on. That said, we're still looking for something of a more 'normal' race in '09, to better gauge the relative positions of the field and maybe the massive undulating asphalt will provide the answers we crave this weekend."

Chris Evans adds: "Are we back already? Better to get it out of the way now I suppose. I don't expect much from the racing, but it will be interesting to see how the teams with new diffusers get on. I still think we will see the Brawns and Toyotas at the front and the Ferraris near the back."

Finally, Lou keeps it short and sweet: "To be honest, I don't have much to say about China, erm, I hope it doesn't rain?"

Team by Team



With the rear diffuser issues over, Williams can look ahead to the race without any problems hanging over their shoulders. Rosberg is predicting good things in China: "Shanghai's a driver's track. There's a great mix of corners and then there are those two long straights so plenty of overtaking opportunities around the lap which will be good for the racing. I'm confident that we'll have another competitive weekend in China. Top eight for sure." Nakajima is also hopeful that things will have improved on 2008: "Last year we struggled on tracks like China, but now our car is looking quite strong. It's well balanced in the high and low speed corners so I'm hoping we'll go much better this year and I can score my first points of the season."

Over at Renault, Piquet knows it's a team game: "We improved the car between Australia and Malaysia and we need to continue in this direction to try and get more from our package in China. I know the guys back at the factory are working really hard to prepare upgrades for later in the year and I'm sure we will continue to get stronger and stronger throughout the season." Meanwhile, Alonso is anticipating a fun-filled weekend: "It's definitely a circuit that I enjoy and it's quite similar to Sepang with some quick corners, long straights and low-speed sections. You therefore have to find a compromise with the set-up to make sure you have enough downforce for the high-speed sections, but also good straight-line speed."

For Toyota, Trulli is feeling optimistic about the race, and how much better the car is this year. He says: "We have started the season very strongly. It shows how much progress we have made since last season that in Malaysia I was a little disappointed with fourth because I wanted to finish on the podium and fight for the win." Glock is finding it hard to wrap his head around this year's calendar: "It seems strange to be going to China in April because it has always been later in the season; the weather looks like it could be a bit cooler than usual. I quite enjoy racing at Shanghai because it's an interesting track. Last year I went well there and scored points, but I'm hoping to get more than seventh place this weekend, that's for sure."

Hamilton is also hoping for better things this race, saying: "We got it spot-on last year, and while I don't expect us to enjoy that sort of performance advantage this season, I think we're all looking forward to a good showing. Hopefully, some of the upgrades we've added to MP4-24 for this race will have a benefit." And Heikki tells us about his favourite turns: "The best corners on the Shanghai International Circuit are Turns Six and Seven – the fast, sweeping left- and right-handers. The left is almost flat in sixth before you shift down a gear and change direction at very high speed."

Kubica is another driver worrying about the weather: "It's the first time we're going to Shanghai at this time of year, when there is a high chance of rain. That can have a major impact on the whole weekend, of course." Malaysia is still a sore subject, clearly. Heidfeld adds that the lower temperatures will affect the tyres, so that is something else to watch out for.

Sutil is hoping to pick up some results when opportunities allow, he says: "This year I've got a 100% finish record so far, and I want to keep this up. We've seen that some of the other teams are having problem with KERS and the order is not so fixed at the moment so if you get to the finish there's a good chance you could do well." He adds, though, that when they return to Europe, the goal should be to race on merit, and not just wait for other drivers to struggle. Teammate Fisichella knows that the competition is fierce, though: "I think it is even tighter than it was last year and a lot more unpredictable too. Some teams you would expect to be up there at the front are midfield, and we've seen that if you get the strategy right or wrong it can make a really big difference. You just can't afford to slip up, even more so than last year."

Current championship leader Jenson Button is glad to have had a minute to take in everything that's happened. "I am understandably delighted with how our season has begun however we are only two races in and everyone at the team is aware that our competitors will not stand still. We fully expect a tough fight from here if we want to continue our early successes." Barrichello is happy to be back at Shanghai: "It seems strange to be returning to China



already but I'm looking forward to the weekend as Shanghai is an impressive facility and the circuit provides an interesting challenge for the drivers. The track holds some good memories for me as I won the first race here in 2004. With the car that we have this year, it is so exciting to be able to return with the opportunity to compete at the front again."

Red Bull and Toro Rosso have no preview quotes, as per usual, but it has emerged that Adrian Newey is staying in the UK whilst the rest travel to China. He'll be working hard on trying to adapt their car with the new and now-legal diffusers.

Finally, Ferrari have decided not to run KERS this weekend, after the disasters they suffered in Malaysia. With way too much smoke and a race ending problem with KERS on Sunday (that was masked by the red flag situation), the team just don't want to risk any safety issues this weekend. Stefano Domenicali says: "It is for sure giving us performance, but until the moment the system is safe and reliable, we cannot risk it. At this moment we need to be basic, we need to bring home what we can in these conditions and wait for the development of the new car and then see. At this stage it is really important to be basic with everything." What with that and the personnel reshuffle, things should be looking up for the team. Maybe.

That's it for this episode. Please join us on Sidepodcast.com for live commenting if you can, we'll be there for every single session. Don't forget to leave your short summaries at the end of each day and they'll get read out in these F1 Digest shows. See you tomorrow for the Free Practice roundup.

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