



F1 Digest 2009 – Bahrain GP

Welcome to F1 Digest 2009 – Bahrain GP.

With Toyota dominating in qualifying, we were looking forward to seeing if they could keep it going throughout the race. Here's what happened.

The Race

We may have been concerned about the chances of a sandstorm, but the real issue heading into the race on Sunday was the heat. It was 36 degrees C, with the track temperature up to 51. The wind was blowing, but there was no chance of finding a cool breeze without the aid of a fan.

The tyre of choice to start was the soft, and we watched the lights go off and the race begin. Glock made a great start, overtaking Trulli almost instantly. Hamilton also put his KERS advantage to good effect and got past the pole-sitter as well. Trulli managed to take the position back, though, and Hamilton lost the other gained position to Button at the end of the first lap.

Meanwhile, Kubica and Nakajima both had to pit for a nose change, having been part of a first corner incident. Kovalainen also looked like he was involved, losing several places before the end of the first lap. Webber was making up places though, having started at the back, and by the end of lap 5 he was fighting Piquet for tenth place.

By lap 11, Glock came in for his first pit stop – the Toyotas initially running a three stop strategy on both cars. Trulli came in on the next lap, managing to get ahead of his teammate thanks to a shorter stop. He also came out ahead of Alonso, who wasn't having any of it. The pair of them battled round a few corners, a great battle to watch, but eventually the Renault got in front.

Button pitted from the lead on lap 15, which gave Vettel a chance out front, but the Brawn GP driver came out in front of both Toyotas – his laps at the front clearly giving him the edge.

The next battle we had to watch was Barrichello who was stuck behind Piquet. Although Rubens had the pace to get past, Piquet used his KERS and defensive driving skills to the maximum, holding up the Brawn car. They weren't directly racing each other, and Barrichello was getting very frustrated behind the Renault, as he was losing about two seconds a lap compared to his teammate towards the front.

By the time Vettel came in for his pit stop, handing the lead back to Button, Barrichello had shaken off the frustration and was up into effective fifth place. He started putting in a couple of fastest laps, and then a few laps later came in for his second pit stop.

Now things started to slow down, with Button ahead, then Trulli holding up Vettel. There were a few laps where it looked like the Red Bull would have a go at getting past, but then the gap got slightly wider. It's unclear whether this was just the natural order of things, Trulli holding drivers up, or because he was on the harder tyre, when everyone else was on the softs. Either way, Vettel couldn't get past.

Button, Trulli and Hamilton behind all came into the pits at the same time, which allowed Vettel into the lead. However, he did not have enough laps to make the difference, and his own pit stop saw him come out in second. He at least had managed to jump his nemesis for this race, Trulli.



Of course, Trulli was now on the softer tyre, which was the preferred rubber, and could close up the gap to Vettel, however he couldn't find a good opportunity to overtake.

Apart from that, the only other battle was between Raikkonen and Glock. The Ferrari's last stop saw him come out behind the Toyota, but he made it past easily. Nakajima retired from the race, quietly pulling into the pitlane and the garage and exiting the car.

For the last seven laps or so, it was simply a procession to the end.

Results

Button takes his third win of the season, and the first without the benefit of a safety car. Vettel finished seven seconds behind him, and Trulli a further two seconds behind the Red Bull. Hamilton finished fourth, with Barrichello fifth, and Raikkonen picked up Ferrari's first points by coming home sixth. The final two points positions went to Glock and Alonso.

Rosberg finished 9th ahead of Piquet, Webber, Kovalainen and Bourdais. Massa is the first classified a lap down, to be joined by Fisichella, Sutil, Buemi and both BMWs – Kubica ahead of Heidfeld – a terrible afternoon for them. Nakajima was the only retiree.

Championship Standings

Button has a nice, healthy lead in the championship now with 31 points. Teammate Barrichello is behind on 19, with Vettel catching him up on 18. Trulli and Glock round out the top five with 14.5 and 12 points respectively.

Brawn GP have a massive lead in the constructors table now – 50 points to Red Bull's 27.5 and Toyota's 26.5. Further back McLaren have 13 and Renault have 5. Force India are the only team with no points now, as Ferrari managed to pick up three this weekend.

From the Comments

RG follows up on his thoughts from yesterday: "BMW, where is it all going wrong? Seem to be involved in every incident and just downright slow. It is making me sad to see a team who were doing so well last year and optimistic for this year to be struggling for 2009. Toyota should feel that they could have done better, poor strategy calls effectively ruined Trulli and Glock's attempt to win."

Alianora has a summary in short sentences: "A thinking victory from Button. Toyota fade into Vettel's clutches. Massa KERSed. Raikkonen salvages Ferrari honour. BMW sank without trace."

Scott Woodwiss really enjoyed the race: "Well done Jenson! Another brilliant performance from Brawn ensures he's still the firm championship favourite. Credit goes to Vettel too who managed to live up to the pace which was expected of him after his qualifying effort. I'm disappointed in Toyota after their front row lockout, but pleased for Lewis after a solid afternoon's work. Thank goodness we can now rest up after a hectic start to the season and look forward to Europe. 4 races in 5 weeks has probably taken it out of everyone, myself included!" And me, Scott, and me.

Sara, though, is anxious to move on: "Great job by Jenson and a good day at the office for Vettel. I wonder how long it will be before things are shaking up at BMW after a dire long haul trip with the one exception of Nick's second. Glad to see Kimi finally in the points. Now lets get to Europe."



And Sean finishes things up for us: “Finally some points for Ferrari, another good win for Brawn. Toyota were disappointing but I’d still back them to get a win this year. Vettel did well to keep up, while Webber did well to make up the 8 or so places that he did, would definitely have scored had he not been blocked. People keep talking about heads rolling at Ferrari, Renault or Toro Rosso, but how long have BMW got before people start wondering about them. Another poor race finishing bottom two, they’ll want to improve. As will Nakajima.”

Team by Team

McLaren had a mixed day with Hamilton 4th and Kovalainen 12th. The latter says it all went wrong at the beginning: “My start was a disaster. Obviously, to begin the race on the prime tyre was the wrong choice. The harder tyres didn't have the right grip and soon started to deteriorate. The tyres started vibrating even though there wasn't a flat-spot.” Lewis is pleased with fourth and reiterates his comments to the team that they just need to keep on working.

Bourdais appears to be in a good mood, but I’m so surprised by it, I just can’t tell: “It was a really good day for me, except that I started so far back on the grid, which meant I couldn't get into the points. But clearly, the car was working well and I had a good race pace. The team adopted the right strategy starting me on Primes and after that I was quite quick.” Buemi is the one having a bad race for a change: “I'm not happy with the way it went today. It was very difficult and it could have been better. My start was bad with a lot of wheelspin, losing places and then I was unable to attack and sliding a lot. I am not sure why I struggled with the car, as it's behaviour was really strange.”

For Force India, Sutil found it tricky out there: “It was a long race, very tough, and the temperatures were very high. Everything was on the limit, the car and myself, but actually it was a very consistent race.” Fisichella was also in the wars: “The temperatures were the hottest we've had this year and I was really in some pain in the closing stages as my seat was rubbing against my right hip. By the end it was very badly bruised.”

Massa also found his race decided at the very start: “I was sandwiched between Kimi and Rubens and the front wing got broken after making contact with my team-mate's rear wheel. At first, I didn't realise what had really happened and so I came in after two laps to change the nose. Then, after a good start with a clear track, I found myself in traffic and my hopes of climbing up the order evaporated.” Kimi is taking his result with a pinch of salt: “I am happy to have picked up a few points but I can't be that pleased with our performance level. I've been around long enough not to get very excited about a sixth place.”

Over at Williams, Nakajima explains what happened to him: “It was very close going into the first corner on the second lap and I damaged my front wing so I had to pit early. I came out at the back of the field and from there I couldn't make up any ground. In the end, my oil pressure was spiking so we took the decision to retire the car.” Meanwhile, Rosberg finished just outside the points but thinks KERS is the root of the problem: “It was not so good today. I was on the limit and really got the best out of it, but we were simply not quick enough. I lost so many places at the start because all of the KERS cars came flying past me, which was really shocking because I had a very good start.”

Vettel also lost out due to KERS: “A good result and good points, but it was a difficult race. The start was okay, but then suddenly Lewis was next to me - he must have pressed his special button and got an advantage. At the first corner we were three deep, me in the middle and Jenson on the outside, so I had to give way and lost two positions.” Of course he managed to make the positions back again. Webber also made up quite a lot of places, and he’s reasonably happy: “If you don't start near the front in these races we know the score, but I did my best. It was a good day for Sebastian, which shows the performance of the car. My mechanics worked like hell and the car was reliable, so we'll have our day.”

For Renault, Flavio Briatore sums up the Grand Prix for both drivers: “We had higher expectations for this weekend but sadly we have come away with only one point. Fernando did not have a good start and this compromised the



rest of his race despite his best efforts. Nelson had an excellent race, moving up from 15th and driving aggressively and consistently. It's just a shame that he missed out on the points." It looks like Piquet may have done enough to keep his job, then.

Trulli can't hide his disappointment, because he thought they could convert the pole position into a win. He says: "I was slightly slower into the first corner than Timo so I spent the first stint following him. I knew I was going longer than him but it was still difficult." Glock was surprised to find himself in front of Trulli but found it didn't last long: "We were the first car to pit, which was already critical. But when I went out on the prime tyres I don't know how many seconds I lost on the first two laps because I was really struggling for grip. I couldn't get any heat into the tyres and I really lost the race in the second stint."

It would only be fair to call BMWs weekend a disaster. Kubica says: "My race was destroyed after corner one. I was between Nick and another car, we touched each other and I destroyed my front wing. Then after the crash there was a miscommunication with the pit crew. I asked to come in straight away, but was only able to pit after the second lap." And Heidfeld: "The result is a disaster, although we were unlucky with the collision in the first corner. At first I thought the suspension was broken, but I only had to have a new nose fitted in the pits and then continued." He sums it up as a race to forget.

Finally, Brawn GP did it again – this time not from pole position either. Barrichello finished fifth, and says although it was a difficult race for him, mostly because of Piquet, the points are extremely valuable. Race winner Jenson says: "It was a great race today and I'm so happy to have seen the chequered flag without a safety car or red light in front of me! To achieve my third victory of the season is amazing and we are going back to Europe with a strong lead in both championships. I couldn't wish for anything more."

Quote of the Day

That's it for this show, and that's the last of the back to back races this year. Now we get two glorious weeks to relax, and I'll leave you with this quote from Ross Brawn saying the same:

"After a demanding but successful start of the season, we are all looking forward to returning home and the opportunity for the team to celebrate together before our focus turns to the start of the European season in Spain in two weeks."