



## F1 Digest 2009 – Monaco Free Practice

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This is F1 Digest 2009 – Monaco Free Practice.

With Friday being a holiday in Monaco, Free Practice got underway today, Thursday. Here's what happened.

### Free Practice 1

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The sun was out for the first practice session in Monaco, with the air temperature at 24 degrees C, and the track just a few degrees higher at 29. When the session got underway, Force India led the obligatory installation laps, but it was Buemi who posted the first lap time, a relatively slow 1:25. The fastest FP1 time from last year was a 1:15. Glock and Trulli both headed out onto track, joined by both Ferraris. Glock and Massa traded the fastest time, with Massa settling in at the top.

The BMW boys were still to set a time, but meanwhile, Hamilton was hard at work behind the wheel, dragging his McLaren up to fourth, and then fastest.

Having only completed an installation lap, Heidfeld was heard on his radio to the mechanics, suggesting that he had brake issues making it dangerous to drive. Out on track, Kovalainen may have needed to use his brakes better as he headed down an escape road rather than taking the corner.

Vettel was in bigger trouble, though, as a plume of smoke followed him out of the tunnel. His engine had given up part way through. As Barrichello topped the times, Red Bull's misery continued, with Webber reporting an unknown vibration to his engineers.

The BMWs were posting times, slow ones. Kubica was in 18<sup>th</sup>, Heidfeld in 17<sup>th</sup>. As normal, Kubica had a string of complaints for his engineers to digest. No grip and trouble braking were the key points.

The last few minutes saw a flurry of action, but there were no major improvements. Barrichello held his own at the top.

### Results

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Barrichello posted a 1:17.189 to finish ahead of Massa, Hamilton, Kovalainen and Raikkonen. Nakajima hit a 1:18 dead on, followed by Rosberg and Button – almost nine seconds off his teammates time. Alonso was the first to drop a whole second down, with Webber rounding out the top ten.

Buemi and Piquet were next, the two hardest working men with 36 laps each. Vettel finished the morning 13<sup>th</sup>, despite his engine problems, and he was followed by Bourdais and Fisichella. The BMWs and their dodgy brakes were 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, whilst the Toyotas kept Sutil off the bottom, Glock ahead of Trulli who settled for last place.

### Free Practice 2

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Although the air temperature ahead of FP2 remained the same as the morning, at 24 degrees C, the track temperature rocketed up to 41 degrees. Once again it was Buemi who set the first time, but he was followed by pretty much everyone. Only the Red Bulls remained in the garage, as they were still working on the problems from the first session.



Kubica's BMW engine gave up in spectacular fashion, a trail of flames and smoke following him. His session was over before it had really begun. The times were tumbling, with Rosberg at the top, knocked down by Kovalainen, then Hamilton and then Alonso. It continued to change until eventually Hamilton staked his claim on the top spot.

After half an hour, Vettel emerged from the Red Bull garage, and he managed to get up to eighth. Another fifteen minutes later, Webber was out and about but he only posted the 17<sup>th</sup> fastest time.

Massa knocked Hamilton off the top spot, whereas Raikkonen could only manage third, Kovalainen improved to P1 only to be pushed down by Barrichello.

The times continued to improve, Hamilton jumped up to second, then Rosberg – the Friday specialist took the top spot. They traded the top spot for a couple of laps, but it was the Williams who held his own once the session was over.

## Results

If he hadn't done it every other weekend, we'd have assumed Rosberg was showing off to his home crowd, but he took the top spot with a 1:15.243. Hamilton was just behind him, two tenths off his pace, with FP1 leader Barrichello a further tenth off. Button finished 4<sup>th</sup> with Massa up to 5<sup>th</sup> and Vettel making the most of his working engine to finish 6<sup>th</sup>.

Kovalainen ended up 7<sup>th</sup> followed by Raikkonen and Nakajima was the first to dip into the 1:16s. Piquet finished ahead of Alonso by just over two tenths of a second, whilst Webber only beat Sutil by one tenth. Trulli finished the day 14<sup>th</sup>, with Buemi and Bourdais behind him – the Toro Rosso boys put in 47 laps each. Finally, Heidfeld was 17<sup>th</sup> and Kubica was last with no time. Glock and Fisichella sat between them.

## Team by Team

By all accounts, Red Bull had a bit of a disastrous day, and Vettel knows it might count against him: "We had an engine failure in the morning, which cost us some track time. Things like that are important for the driver, as well as the car, as you need to get into a good rhythm round here. Nonetheless the boys fixed the car, which I think was quite tricky as some of the parts arrived last minute, so it wasn't easy." Nevertheless, he remains pretty upbeat, as does Webber who thinks the team did well to gather as many laps of data as they did under the circumstances.

For Renault, Alonso says: "Monaco on a Thursday is always more important for the drivers than for the team because it gives us time to get used to the circuit and feel comfortable in the car. We did quite a lot of laps today so it was useful for me and I'm happy with the car." That is a good start, then. Piquet says the track was dirty first thing but kept on evolving throughout the day, and he thinks they are in reasonable shape overall.

Trulli is thankful that the sessions were on Thursday this week: "In second practice I had some problems with the tyres and with degradation so we must look into that and work out a solution. We have plenty of work to do but here in Monaco we have an extra day to study the data and improve the set-up. We certainly won't be having a day off tomorrow." And Glock adds: "We need to work on getting better traction and getting the best out of the tyres, which was a bit of a challenge in the afternoon. It's tricky but we have a lot of information to look at and we'll make improvements before qualifying."

Over at Force India, Sutil says the day was pretty normal, but the tyres were the problem: "Both the soft and the supersofts seem to be really bad and after even a medium-length run the graining is so bad it really affects the balance of the car. I am confident we can find a solution for qualifying though." Fisichella agrees grip was a problem, but he's happy with the work they completed today: "Not a bad start to the weekend. We used the morning session



to check the set-up and the balance and then completed some longer runs in the afternoon when the track had a bit more rubber laid down.”

Barrichello was fastest in the morning, and says they’re feeling pretty optimistic for the weekend, although constantly conscious of the close competition. Button, on the other hand, was struggling a little: “We are going in the right direction following this afternoon’s practice session however this morning proved quite challenging for me. I had rear locking in the low speed corners and understeer in the high speed corners and didn’t feel quite comfortable in the car.” He says things improved as the sessions wore on, though.

Buemi had simple goals for today: “It is also positive that we had no problems with the car and that we didn’t crash, which is always a key to a good weekend here in Monaco.” Bourdais has slightly more issues with the car: “The car felt quite good on the short runs, but less so on the longer ones, when the car’s behaviour made it difficult to sustain the lap times. We got through our work programme for the day. We are suffering from a slight lack of pace, but overall we did the best we could in these two sessions.”

Massa is feeling upbeat about the results, saying: “It’s hard to say if there’s been an improvement since Barcelona, but we are in amongst the other front runners, which is already a good sign.” Kimi is also understatedly happy: “I would say the car is handling reasonably well: there are still a few areas where we can improve but I am pleased with what we achieved today.”

Kubica has little to say: “Today was extremely disappointing. We clearly lack outright performance and, due to the engine failure in the second session, I had far too little track time. There is nothing to add.” Heidfeld also isn’t impressed: “After brake problems on both cars in the morning, the second session was okay for me. On the long runs I was lucky in terms of traffic, but it was the opposite when I was on new tyres towards the end of the session.”

Hamilton’s day has really cheered him up: “Driving around Monaco is a spectacular sensation - you can’t compare it to any other circuit. You get such a huge buzz here; I love this place – it reminds me how much I love this sport, why I love racing and why I love Formula 1. From today’s performance, I think Q3 is definitely possible on Saturday. I’m optimistic about shooting for the top five – I hope we can get there.” Kovalainen, though, struggled with traffic, although he admits that’s normal for Monaco.

Finally, for Williams, Rosberg ended the day on top and said that it was a nice, clean lap after suffering problems in the morning. He has admitted he was running pretty light, though. Nakajima had the opposite experience, with the morning running okay, but more problems in the afternoon. Perhaps they can compare notes and meet in the middle.

### Quote of the Day

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That’s all for now, we’ve got a short break before the action gets going again on Saturday. I’ll leave you with this quote from Dominic Harlow of Force India: “With these roads open to the public tomorrow afternoon the circuit will be almost back to square one for Saturday morning, but we can expect further improvement before qualifying.”