



## Episode 1 – Season Review 2006 (Part 1)

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[Intro: Rich Reich, Keeping Up With The Race]

**Chris:** Welcome to Sidepodcast. My name's Chris and I'll be your host for today, as I take a look at the 2006...

**Me:** Hey, hey, hey, what about me?

**Chris:** Okay, I'm joined by him, and he always has a lot to say.

**Me:** Hello.

**Chris:** We're eagerly looking forward to the 2007 season, but as we still have 76 days, 7 hours, 30 minutes and 30 seconds left to go...

**Me:** Seems like a long time.

**Chris:** It seemed like a good idea to look back at what happened in the last season that will shape the year ahead. So, without further ado, let's dive right in.

[Sweeper]

**Chris:** Way back in March, it all kicked off with the Bahrain Grand Prix. Bahrain is notoriously sandy, and the weekend was particularly windy, which was probably Raikkonen's excuse for ending up last in qualifying. Okay, maybe it was some kind of suspension failure that meant the Finn found himself fighting his way through the crowd. There was also a new qualifying format which may have been another excuse. This year, the FIA decided to spice up the qualifying rules, because they received a host of complaints about the one-lap system used the year before.

**Me:** It was awful.

**Chris:** The new idea involved three separate attempts to get a good time. One short stint knocked out the six slowest, and another to do the same, and then a final long stint to burn off fuel and place the final ten.

**Me:** So you've got two 15 minute stints and then one 20 minute stint, is that right?

**Chris:** Something like that.

**Me:** Because it changed throughout the season. To start off the season, that sounds about right.

**Chris:** Yea, I believe so. The back markers were also having a bad start, with Monteiro in his Midland F1 relegated to a start from the pitlane, and Yuji Ide under investigation even before the warm up lap had been completed.

**Me:** Superstar in the making that man.

**Chris:** For future reference, Yuji Ide was dubbed as Mr Idiot in our household. Not just any old Idiot, that's Mr. Idiot to you. The Ferrari's showed an impressive form for the start of the year by being side by side on the front row. The



race was particularly eventful, with plenty of overtaking. A specific instance would be Button performing a suave overtaking...

**Me:** Ah, Mr Button. I wondered how long it would be.

**Chris:** It was a suave overtaking move...

**Me:** Oh, I bet it was.

**Chris:** On an unsuspecting Montoya in the McLaren. Before even twenty laps were completed, Raikkonen had pushed his way up to ninth but he was one-stopping and the confusion of all the pit stops would eventually iron out his position – in third! From the very back of the grid. Alonso in the Renault was the only one who could keep up with Michael's incredible lead, but found himself frustrated by the lack of blue flags as he tried to lap some of the trailing cars. A spectacular pit stop took place with Alonso emerging wing mirror to wing mirror with the German, and although Michael shoved as hard as he could, Fernando managed to hold him off to take the lead, and the win.

**Me:** Ah, it was a good start to the season that.

[Sweeper]

**Chris:** The action moved on to Malaysia with the new qualifying system causing a bit of a stir, with the added confusion of several drivers having to change their engines.

**Me:** I have to object to Renault's tactics during the second qualifying of the season because in each session they were leaving it right to the very last minute before coming out. I was not happy with them.

**Chris:** Were you scared?

**Me:** I was right on the edge of my seat. I tell you, I'm not playing poker with those people.

**Chris:** It really didn't matter anyway, because no one actually knew the grid for the start of the Grand Prix until fifteen minutes before the lights were due to go out.

**Me:** Not very good that one.

**Chris:** Raikkonen did not qualify well, and ended his weekend miserably by being booted off the track on the first lap. His nemesis was Christian Klien who had to pit straightaway for a new suspension. He returned four laps down and eventually pulled out of the race with more mechanical troubles. Other casualties of engineering problems included fellow Red Bull David Coulthard...

**Me:** Fellow Red Bull? What an actual Red Bull?

**Chris:** Fellow Red Bull driver David Coulthard, both Williams drivers, Heidfeld in the BMW and Speed in the Toro Rosso. Button spent the majority of his race in a Renault sandwich, with eventual race winner Fisichella and teammate Alonso dipping in and out of the lead. Alonso managed to jump the Honda driver, but decided to settle behind his fellow Renault to take second. The Ferrari's started ridiculously low down the grid because of engine changes, but they managed to claw their way through the field and finish with Massa in 5<sup>th</sup> and Schumacher in 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Me:** As it should be.



[Sweeper]

**Chris:** Onto the Australian Grand Prix now and the best start to a race day by any driver ever - Montoya who managed to have a spectacular spin on the parade lap.

**Me:** Which is quite an achievement really.

**Chris:** When you think about it.

**Me:** Absolutely.

**Chris:** Luckily for him, Fisichella stalled on the grid causing another warm-up lap, giving Monty time to sort himself out.

**Me:** What a save.

**Chris:** Jenson Button proved his worth this weekend, by snatching the Pole Position in qualifying. However, due to a safety car bunching up the pack, and the usual super-fast getaway by Alonso behind him, Button soon lost the lead to the Renault. The safety car was caused by Klien, Massa and Rosberg tangling themselves together, and in a separate incident, Coulthard and Trulli meeting. Coulthard was the only driver who managed to escape and go on to finish the race, the others went home early. Takuma Sato in the Super Aguri was impressing everyone in 12<sup>th</sup> position, ahead of Coulthard, Fisichella and Barrichello. Although Sato went on to finish in 12<sup>th</sup> position, by the time those drivers had overtaken him, and others had retired from the race, he was still bringing up the rear of the pack with team-mate Mr Idiot.

**Me:** Bless 'em. Bless 'em both. Well, no, don't bless Mr Idiot. Just bless Sato.

**Chris:** Mark Webber had a moment of glory, leading his home Grand Prix. The Australian was only there because others had pitted before him, and it didn't last long, as he suffered some transmission trouble and rather embarrassingly pulled off the track.

**Me:** Oops.

**Chris:** Michael Schumacher was pushing too hard to try and make his way through the pack, and found himself crashing at the start of the pit lane. The German climbed from his car, and obviously a little disorientated from a heavy crash, walked straight into the Toyota garage.

**Me:** What was all that about? Tell me what happened there. Firstly, he makes an absolute mess of the racetrack by totaling his car into the wall and there's shards of carbon fibre everywhere. I mean, who the hell's gonna clean that up? Then he just wanders over the pit wall, across the pit lane! Did he look? You know, did he check any cars were coming? I didn't see him look both ways.

**Chris:** Look left and right.

**Me:** Absolutely. Not a good example to the kids. He wandered straight across the pit lane, into the wrong garage and vanishes.

**Chris:** No one questioned it.



**Me:** No one questioned it. No one knows where he went. Did he ever come out? I suppose he did. Odd.

**Chris:** Two more safety cars, plenty of pit stop panicking, a drive through by Ralf and a retirement by Montoya later, Alonso took the win. Button drove us all completely wild by blowing up and stopping inches from the finish line. He fell from behind Alonso to tenth position.

**Me:** Can I just clarify, all?

**Chris:** He drove me completely wild by blowing up and stopping...

**Me:** You just wanted him to get out and push, didn't you? It's only a couple of metres, push!

[Sweeper]

**Chris:** The San Marino Grand Prix was the weekend when everything went Schumacher's way. He took his second pole of the season, and broke Ayrton Senna's record of 65 pole positions. Thankfully there were no engine problems like the previous race and everyone took to the grid in the same order as they actually qualified.

**Me:** What a relief.

**Chris:** Whilst most of the pack got away cleanly at the start, Albers found himself being charged off the track by an over-zealous Mr Idiot. Neither driver completed the race, although Ide did get through 23 more laps. Those would turn out to be his last racing laps, however, because the stewards investigated the incident and it was deemed that Yuji Ide was not competent enough to have his super licence.

**Me:** He's not competent enough to have any licence.

**Chris:** Trulli collided with Liuzzi and eventually retired, while the Toro Rosso was able to continue. Aside from that, collisions and overtaking manoeuvres were scarce. All the position shuffling seemed to take place in the pits, with another battle between Michael Schumacher and Fernando Alonso being fought by the pit crews. The German eventually managed to come out on top, and by the end of the race, Alonso pulled back, seemingly struggling with brake and tyre wear, and probably content enough with second place. Jenson Button had a...

**Me:** Oh, not that man again.

**Chris:** No, this one's important. Jenson Button had a complete disaster during one of his pit stops, when the lollipop man raised the signal a little too early, and then whipped the lollipop back down to try and stop the Honda.

**Me:** Oh yea, that wasn't very bright, was it? Cos he took out the guy with the fuel hose, the guy who was supporting the guy with the fuel hose, he got hit over the head with the lollipop himself, smashed to pieces on his helmet and he sailed off down the pit lane with half the fuel hose in his car.

**Chris:** I don't understand why the lollipop man thought he could stop a Formula 1 car with a little lollipop.

**Me:** I think he possibly thinks he's more powerful than he really is.

**Chris:** Whilst the blame does seem to lie with the lollipop man, the team were very magnanimous about the incident after the race.



**Me:** Did they say it was his fault?

**Chris:** They were very diplomatic.

**Me:** Right.

[Sweeper]

**Chris:** The first of the German races, otherwise known as the European Grand Prix was a sunny day, just right for a repeat of the last race. This time Alonso was on pole, but strong qualifying from the Ferrari's meant Michael was following him with Massa behind. On the first corner, Liuzzi got caught up in another incident, and he and Coulthard caused a visit from the safety car, followed by both retiring from the race. Button held up Raikkonen for a couple of laps, but the Finn soon passed him, and Button's engine couldn't stand the pressure, giving up just 28 laps in. Other retirements included Klien on the same lap, both Super Aguri's (with Franck Montagny replacing Mr Idiot), Montoya in the McLaren and Ralf in the Toyota. All eyes were on the battle between Alonso and Michael, which was almost an instant replay of San Marino. The pair traded fastest laps one after the other, but ultimately it came down to the strategy imposed by Ross Brawn and Pat Symonds, with the Ferrari pitting later and coming out ahead of his rival. Alonso finished second, in a Ferrari sandwich, with Massa behind him.

[Sweeper]

**Chris:** Alonso made a special effort at his home race and started in pole position, with his team-mate just behind him. The two Ferrari's took third and fourth but Schumacher didn't seem too perturbed by the fact, considering how well starting behind pole turned out for him last weekend. David Coulthard started his 200<sup>th</sup> Grand Prix, which is a huge number, but the weekend didn't exactly shine as the Brit finished down in 14<sup>th</sup> position. Montoya continued his poor run of luck (or skill)...

**Me:** That's a bit harsh.

**Chris:** As he found himself spinning early on in the race and finishing his weekend in the gravel.

**Me:** Oops.

**Chris:** There were less retirements this weekend, with Montoya being joined only by Ralf Schumacher, Scott Speed, a Midland and a Super Aguri.

**Me:** Just those then, that's all.

**Chris:** Yea, not very many.

**Me:** Not very many. Okay.

**Chris:** Michael leapfrogged Fisichella during one round of pit stops but couldn't manage the other Renault and settled for second place.

[Sweeper]



**Chris:** Monaco is my favourite circuit of the year. The glamour, the showbiz, the history and most of all the fact that it is never dull. This year was no different, with perhaps the most controversial bit of driving ever seen. During qualifying the man himself, Mr Michael Schumacher stopped his car deliberately on the track meaning that others, namely Alonso, could not finish their hot laps.

**Me:** No, you saw that, didn't you? You watched it. Everyone saw the onboard footage. How did he stand there with a straight face and say he didn't mean to do that?

**Chris:** I don't know.

**Me:** Knowing that there's a camera on his car. If you drove round with a camera on your car, say you just went to the shops, and you, I don't know, you accidentally crashed where you shouldn't have done. If you knew there was a camera on your car, would you stand up there defiantly, and say you didn't mean to do it. It was not intentional.

**Chris:** No. I would own up.

**Me:** You'd say, there's a camera, they're going to find out eventually.

**Chris:** You know, the Ferrari people when they talk about it now, they don't say whether they did or didn't do it, they just talk about themselves as a big family and how they stick by each other.

**Me:** Right, guilty as charged then.

**Chris:** Exactly. The stewards decided to take away Michael's pole position and put him right to the back of the grid. A fitting reward for a cheating driver.

**Me:** Back in my day that wasn't a fitting reward for a cheating driver. Taking his licence away would have been a fitting reward for a cheating driver.

**Chris:** Fair enough. The Ferrari was joined by its sister car at the back, as Massa legitimately, but rather stupidly, crashed in qualifying. Alonso, Webber and Raikkonen, were therefore promoted into the top three spots, but it didn't take Webber long to fall behind. Although the Australian put in a great drive with plenty of effort, he suffered more reliability issues and was out about halfway through.

**Me:** He's having a good season.

**Chris:** Yep. The safety car emerged, which caused Raikkonen to suffer the exact same problem, his weekend going, quite literally, up in smoke. This year has seen Heidfeld take over Trulli's title as the 'Hold Everybody Up' guy, and at one point he had no less than seven cars suffering behind him. Michael didn't seem to struggle though, charging past cars at every opportunity and eventually finishing in 5th. Not bad from the back of the grid, it has to be said. Alonso took the top spot, with Montoya second, and a surprising third for David Coulthard. Red Bull boss Christian Horner vowed to jump into the swimming pool naked if David managed to step onto the podium. This seems only fair, as the Red Bull Superman promotion saw Coulthard picking up his trophy in a bright red cape.

**Me:** That is a stupid bet to make with Coulthard around that circuit. David is awesome around that track. I mean, it's the only track he's awesome around and has ever been, but you don't want to make a bet like that against Coulthard at Monaco, do you?

**Chris:** No. It was all just a little bit embarrassing.



[Sweeper]

**Chris:** Silverstone is a notoriously straight-forward drive for the majority of cars on the track, and with Alonso qualifying first, it was never going to be the most exciting of races. All media was, of course, focused on Jenson Button but as usual, it was misguided. The man himself had very little faith in his chances for this weekend. A disastrous qualifying was followed up by an early exit meaning the Brits could wave goodbye to any dreams of a home win. Mark Webber and Ralf Schumacher joined him by saying hello to each other within the first few minutes of the race, meaning Webber again left without finishing a race.

**Me:** Hi. Hi. How you doin'?

**Chris:** Well, they might have said more than hello. There might have been swear words involved – who knows?

**Me:** I can imagine it though, I like to think of them saying hi. Hi.

**Chris:** A safety car prevented the leader making any headway, but Alonso, Raikkonen and Schumacher, in that order, fought for the top spot. Alonso started to pull away, leaving the others squabbling amongst themselves but Schumacher managed to leapfrog Kimi in the second round of pit stops. Aside from that, it's all just a bit of a stroll in the park.

**Me:** I wouldn't fancy strolling in that park.

[Sweeper]

**Chris:** Across the pond to Canada then, my absolute favourite quote of the year happened as the drivers lined up to take their places on the grid. Scott Speed, in a strong American accent, bossed his team around, enquiring about the temperature of the engine. Concerned that Liuzzi's temperature would be cooler than his, he warned: "Somebody's heads gonna roll." It's worth staying up just for that.

**Me:** Absolutely.

**Chris:** The two Renaults were on pole. Fisichella somehow jumped the start, which puts pay to some suggestions of Renault's early-warning lights system. He later received a drive-through penalty because of this which effectively ruined any chances he had (which were slim), and meant Michael's day got a little brighter.

**Me:** I don't think you can blame Renault's start light system on Fisichella being basically useless. I don't think it brings that into question at all.

**Chris:** You mean he had the information, but he blew it.

**Me:** He basically messed it up.

**Chris:** The back markers had a particularly bad start to the race, but that's not exactly surprising news. Albers and Monteiro tangled causing a safety car, and when the pack restarted, Franck Montagny's engine blew up. Michael's driving turned a little bit erratic, with two missed chicanes, and a small brush with a wall that didn't appear to hinder him. Alonso and Raikkonen were walking away with the podium places, so perhaps the usually cool-headed German was finally succumbing to some pressure. Okay, in actual fact, quite a lot of the driver's were struggling with poor grip and adverse braking conditions. Raikkonen's engine cut out but was restarted, Ralf spun on some rubber debris



on the track and Villeneuve went into the wall. The last disaster pulled out the safety car again which cut Alonso's 25 second lead to practically nothing. Gutted.

**Me:** That, incidentally, was Ralf's fault because didn't Ralf push Villeneuve into the wall, slightly inadvertently. So Ralf, kind of, inadvertently helped his brother bring Alonso back in. Not that he meant to.

**Chris:** Of course not.

**Me:** But worth mentioning.

**Chris:** And in "Should we really be hearing this?" news, Klien was told over team radio that Button is "not good" at restarts and to take advantage. Coulthard as well, was told to "Get Jenson, let's 'ave him." And he did. Montoya's bad season turned even worse when he collided with the wall of champions and found himself walking back to the pits. To compound McLaren's misery team-mate Raikkonen lost his second place to Schumacher when he struggled with the hairpin and had to watch the red car fly past him.

**Me:** That was a useless corner. I could have took that corner better than Raikkonen did, he didn't even try to make it. Hopeless. I'm still seething about that now.

[Sweeper]

**Chris:** So, on that unhappy note, it's time to leave Part One of our 2006 season review. Alonso was leading the championship but Schumacher was looking stronger every race that went by. It was definitely far from over and there was plenty of racing still to come. Make sure to catch Part Two of the season review to remind yourself how the action unfolded.

[Out: Rich Reich, Keeping Up With The Race]