



## Races to Remember – San Marino 2005

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Hello and welcome to Races to Remember, a mini series taking a look back at some of those great Grands Prix that shouldn't be forgotten. Last time we looked at the European Grand Prix in 1993, but today we're travelling just a few years forward to 2005.

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, the San Marino Grand Prix was held for the penultimate time. It was the fourth race on the calendar, and defending champion Michael Schumacher had yet to win a race. The Renault was dominating with Fisichella winning the first round, and Alonso racking up two victories of his own.

Raikkonen put his McLaren on pole, ahead of Alonso and Button. He made a good start and pulled out a lead, but after only nine laps, Kimi was struggling. His car had developed a driveshaft problem and he had to retire from the race. Schumacher had a very poor qualifying and started in 13<sup>th</sup>, but as you would expect, began to make his way through the pack. Unfortunately, he got stuck behind the Trulli train, and couldn't get past. Being stocked full of fuel, Michael wanted to make as much use of his long first stint as possible, but could only make a further leap forward once the Toyota came in for its pit stop. When the Ferrari was called in on lap 27, it was from third and he rejoined in the same position.

The next target on Schumacher's list was second-place Button. He was 20 seconds behind and had a lot of work to do, but it took him just 13 laps to catch up, and in a blink he was past. He set off after Alonso, and soon saw the rear wing of the Renault directly in his path.

Schumacher wanted a home win, needed a victory for his championship campaign, and above all, hated being in second. He tried every legal trick in the book to try and get past the Renault roadblock, but Alonso was playing a smart game. He had the skills in defensive driving to keep the seven times world champion behind him. He slowed wherever possible to not only keep Schumacher from gaining any advantage, but also to stop the pair of them catching up to any traffic. 10 excruciating laps of edge-of-the-seat action, until finally, the last lap was upon us. Schumacher tried at every corner, and there was a heart-stopping moment when Alonso ran wide, but it was not to be. The Renault took its fourth victory in a row, and Schumacher had to settle for second. They were just two tenths apart as they crossed the finish line, with Button's BAR-Honda ten seconds behind.

Of course, if you were watching in the UK, you would have missed half the action. The ITV coverage cut away from the race on the penultimate lap. Completely inexcusable, and a simple way of making this a race to remember for all the wrong reasons.

However, ITV weren't the only culprits on this point. After the race, the BAR-Honda of Jenson Button was found to be underweight once all the fuel was drained. A secondary fuel tank was discovered and the team argued that this was completely within the rules. The race stewards let the matter go, but the FIA overruled the decision and the matter went to court. After reviewing the evidence, the team were found guilty, and both cars were disqualified from the San Marino results, despite the fact only Button's car had been found underweight. The FIA wanted to go even further and ban the team from the entire championship that year, but in the end, they settled for a two race ban. The entire affair overshadowed what was a fascinating race.

The on track battle really was something to behold, as modern F1 is constantly hailed as a miserable time in the sport. Little overtaking, no proper rivalries, that's often the subject of complaints. But we saw an amazing duel between two competitive and closely matched cars, and two extremely competent drivers. What more could you ask for?



That's it for this episode of Races to Remember. We just have one more episode to go now, so don't forget to leave your feedback in the comments, or email me [christine@sidepodcast.com](mailto:christine@sidepodcast.com), and join me tomorrow for the last Race to Remember of this series.

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