



Inside Track – Spa Francorchamps Preview

[Opening credits]

Christine: Welcome to Inside Track, brought to you by Sidepodcast. Each race weekend we present a video preview of the event, and today it's the turn of the Belgian Grand Prix. Coming up on this week's Inside Track, we get the lowdown from the drivers and take a tour of the circuit.

Christine – Voiceover

Massa escaped penalty at the European Grand Prix and kept hold of his victory scoring 10 points. Hamilton finished behind him in second, with Kubica rounding out the podium in third. Kovalainen picked up 5 points, Trulli managed 4 and Vettel's impressive weekend ended with 3.

Hamilton leads the driver's championship with 70 points, but Massa is not that far away on 64. Raikkonen has 57, with Kubica close behind him on 55. Kovalainen has 43 and Heidfeld 41.

The constructors still has Ferrari at the top with 121 points, McLaren next on 113. BMW sit in third with 96 points, then Toyota on 41. Renault have 31 and Red Bull remain on 24.

Christine: Fifteen months ago, Sidepodcast signed up to Twitter and really liked the microblogging format. There's an art to getting your point across in 140 characters or less. However, the more popular Twitter becomes the less stable it is, and we couldn't stand it. Microblogging ceased at Sidepodcast Towers while we scoured the web for an alternative.

Step in identi.ca. That's i-d-e-n-t-i-c-a. It's exactly the same format, except a lot more stable, and in my opinion, a little bit more pretty. Unfortunately, the other half of Sidepodcast beat me to identi.ca/sidepodcast, so you can see what he's talking about there. Follow me at identi.ca/christineb, and I highly recommend signing up and having a go yourself.

[Cut to footage of Hungary. Cut to Sebastien Bourdais.]

Sebastien: We were in Q3 for the first time in Valencia, and obviously to try and score as many points is the target of the team so it's mine as well, and hopefully we're getting close to it.

[Cut to Christian Danner.]

Christian: Luckily now the Spa Formula 1 circuit is a proper up-to-spec Formula 1 track with all the safety issues that are required. It is still a little bit on the challenging side simply because the track layout and the fact that it isn't just a flat piece of concrete that you're racing on.

[Cut to Christine]

Christine: As ever, before we get to our circuit preview, let's remind ourselves what happened in 2007.



The Belgian Grand Prix last year was notable really for the continuing arguments at McLaren. Ferrari had a fabulous weekend, scoring a 1-2 with Kimi on top, and getting the satisfaction of seeing a record fine for McLaren for the espionage affair.

For Ron Dennis and his team things went from bad to worse as first they lost \$100 million and then the warring drivers battled each other side by side from the grid. It seemed a never-ending drag race but in the end Alonso made it stick through the fearsome Eau Rouge and Hamilton settled in behind.

I doubt we'll see such antics from the McLaren boys this year, but we'll have to wait and see. Now let's take a look at one lap around the Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

Christine - Voiceover

It's no secret that this is the majority of the paddock's favourite track so let's have a look at why. Immediately we are thrust into a sharp right hand hair pin, which will make the first lap unmissable. From just over 60 km/h and 2nd gear, drivers can put their foot down to almost 300 km/h, but they'll be wary of approaching the infamous Eau Rouge.

This track simulation doesn't do the corner justice at all, it's an almost full throttle left right flick, going uphill with a blind crest. Beautiful. They don't make 'em like that anymore. At the top of the hill, there's a curve to the left to lead onto the fastest bit of the circuit. In top gear, and crossing the first timing sector at about 330 km/h, we're now approaching Les Combes.

The original Spa track was about 14 and a half kilometres, and splits away at this section of the circuit. Now we only cover 7 of those kilometres, but that still makes Spa by far the longest on the calendar. It's so long, in fact, that if there's any form of inclement weather, which there's likely to be, it can often be raining at one end of the course and completely dry at the other. Fingers crossed, eh?

The next corner, Pouhon, is proclaimed as the second most fascinating part of the lap, unless you're Kovalainen. He thinks this section is harder than Eau Rouge, and requires nerves of steel. It's a fast corner, at 290 km/h, and concentration is vital. Taking the kerbs is important around Spa, to maximise corner speed, but this can be wearing on the tyres. Bridgestone are bringing the hard and medium compounds to Belgium.

Round the long 180 degrees that cross the second timing sector, we're now heading towards home. Creeping above 300 km/h before approaching Blanchimont, a fast left hand bend that barely reduces the speed at all. Just one more section to go now, and what is, quite frankly, a bizarre name for a corner, the Bus Stop. Ever being reprofiled to try and adjust the action, it's tight chicane properties make for a classic end to a superb circuit.

Pole position in 2007 was Kimi Raikkonen in the Ferrari with 1 minute 45.994 seconds.

Christine: That's all for this week. Don't forget that Sidepodcast.com has a new live commenting feature if you have time to spare during any of the free practice sessions, qualifying or the race itself. If that's not your thing, you can always leave me a voicemail on 0121 28 87225 letting me know your thoughts throughout the race weekend. Either way, have a good one.