



Inside Track – Monza Preview

[Opening credits]

Christine – Voiceover

Welcome to Inside Track, coming up this week, for what it's worth, we look at the championship standings, get Trulli's thoughts on racing in Italy, and tour one lap at Monza.

Christine – Voiceover

We all know what happened in Spa by now, and the FIA have finally confirmed the date of McLaren's appeal against Hamilton's penalty as the 22nd September. That's just before the Singapore Grand Prix and therefore means that these standings are somewhat provisional. Nevertheless, Massa took the win in Belgium, ahead of Heidfeld and Hamilton, with Alonso, Vettel and Kubica all getting a good haul of points.

Hamilton still leads the championship on 76 points, with Massa inches behind on 74. Kubica and Raikkonen sit further back, with the BMW ahead 58 to 57. Both still say they're not out of it yet. Heidfeld has 49, and Kovalainen 43.

Ferrari hold their lead at the top of the constructors championship with 131 points, and McLaren sit in second with 119. BMW have 107, and then the battle for fourth sees Toyota on 41, Renault on 36 and Red Bull on 25.

[Cut to footage of Italy. Cut to Jarno Trulli.]

Jarno: Well, it's nice to be back because I have my own friends, got my family, got nice memories, it's a nice place. The background of this region in general, in motorsport is quite strong. The old days, talking about the '50s, we had one of the most important racing events of Formula 1, where Enzo Ferrari, Villoresi, and I think maybe Fangio as well, raced here. And the passion for driving, the emotion I get, the challenge, it's something that I don't want anyone to take this away from me.

Christine - Voiceover

Time for a quick look back at the Italian Grand Prix in 2007, to set us up nicely for this year's race. Last season, things were beginning to look pretty bleak for McLaren, with their spy hearing just around the corner. However, Alonso qualified on pole and led the entire race, meaning they at least had something to celebrate. As ever, with the ongoing battle between team mates, he did his best to keep Hamilton out of second, even using the Ferrari's to his best advantage, but it was not to be, and the pair stood on the podium together.

Also in the race, Coulthard suffered a mighty crash when a collision with Fisichella knocked his front wing under the car and sent him careering off track.

Finally, we saw a couple of laps with the best overtaking of the year, from an unlikely pairing of Rosberg and Button. Although the two only finished 6th and 8th, they made for some seriously entertaining racing.

Now it's time to tour one lap of the circuit in Italy.



Christine - Voiceover

Monza is a fast track that is steeped in glorious motor-racing history, but as with all old circuits these days, it's being moulded into the ever-so-familiar modern layouts. Gradually the chicanes are taking over, and that is just what happens as we hit our first corner. It's a straight drag race off the line to the first chicane, taken in 2nd gear at just over 100 km/h. That leads into the long, sweeping right hander, with exit speeds approaching 300 km/h, to then cross the first sector timing line. The next chicane drops the speeds and gears once more, and now we're at the back of the circuit.

Environmentalists have long been calling for the closure of this race track, as it's forever creeping into the trees, and is of course, somewhat noisy. However the local mayor is fighting for the cause and wants the track to become a national monument. That way we can continue to enjoy racing here for years to come... assuming Bernie lets us.

Anyway, we're at another straight now, proving that this circuit is about as high speed as you can get. The trick is to get a good balance with the short corners, meaning setups should favour low downforce, whilst the engines get a beating. Approaching the Variante Ascari, another key point of the lap, drivers need to reduce down to about third gear as they navigate the final chicane of the circuit. Alex Wurz describes this chicane as one of the best corners on the Formula 1 calendar saying: "Braking is difficult because it's bumpy, and once you've turned in, you jump over the inside kerb. Then get straight back on the power and aim to do the next right and left handers flat. If you can't do it flat, you lose too much time by lifting up."

Having negotiated all that, it's time for the last challenge of Parabolica, a 2nd gear tight right hander that leads round to the pit entrance and the start/finish straight.

Pole position in 2007 was Fernando Alonso in the McLaren with 1 minute 21.997 seconds.

Christine - Voiceover

That's all for this week's Inside Track. We're hoping for a good race, and if Friday's thunderstorms are anything to go by, it should at least be entertaining. Join us on Sidepodcast.com for live commenting if you can, or else I'll see you back here in time for Singapore.