



Inside Track – Shanghai

[Opening credits]

Christine: This is Inside Track from Sidepodcast, and today we are previewing the Chinese Grand Prix. Coming up this week, we hear from Nico Rosberg, look back at 2007 and tour one lap of Shanghai.

Christine – Voiceover

We weren't expecting great things from the race at Fuji, but great things happened regardless. Alonso managed his second victory in a row and picked up 10 points, whilst Kubica and Raikkonen joined him on the podium. Piquet finished a strong fourth, with Trulli fifth and Vettel sixth, picking up three points.

Despite more penalties than we can count, Hamilton still leads the drivers championship with 84 points. Massa and Kubica remain in contention with 79 and 72 respectively. Raikkonen has 63, now out of the title hunt, Heidfeld has 56 and Kovalainen 51.

Ferrari have retaken the lead of the constructors championship with 142 points, and McLaren have 135. BMW are in third with 128 and Renault fourth, Toyota fifth and Toro Rosso sixth.

[Cut to Christine.]

Christine: During the Canada preview, I introduced you to the concept of us live streaming while we recorded these Inside Track previews. It was quite popular, and since then we've expanded. We had a go at live streaming a recording of F1 Minute, and an episode of F1 Digest, but now we're up and running when it comes to the weekly podcast as well.

On a Sunday night, times may vary, you'll find us streaming as we record F1 Debrief, otherwise known as the weekly show, and we take Skype calls and get interactive with the live commenters. It's really fun, and a nice way to spend a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon. Please join us if you can, next time you're free on a Sunday. A thread is always opened on Sidepodcast.com beforehand with the time to tune in.

[Cut to footage of China. Cut to Nico Rosberg.]

Nico: Shanghai is a great track for overtaking because you have the longest straight of the year, which is 1.4 or 1.5 km, I'm not sure. It just takes forever, and at the end of that you have a very, very sharp hairpin, where you can outbrake the guy in front after slipstreaming him on the straight, so it's great for overtaking.

[Cut to Christine]

Christine: Before we go for a lap of Shanghai, let's quickly recap what happened at the Chinese Grand Prix last year. In 2007, it looked as though Lewis Hamilton was ready to sew up the driver's championship. He had the lead over his title rivals, and he had the speed over team mate Alonso. In fact, the Spaniard was so annoyed post-Qualifying, that he kicked a door in the McLaren motorhome.



It rained during the race, though, and Hamilton wore out his tyres which left him struggling for grip. Raikkonen wasted no time in chasing him down to take the lead. With canvas showing, and little rubber left, Hamilton dived for the pit lane, but couldn't make it, and ended up stuck in the gravel. He had left it too late.

Toro Rosso, and particularly Vettel, showed a spark of their future success when they finished fourth, having been in line for a podium until Massa grabbed it from them.

Now let's take a look at the circuit where all that action took place.

[Cut to animated circuit.]

Christine - Voiceover

Everyone always says that the Shanghai International Circuit has amazing facilities and is generally pretty enormous. The two straights are definitely enormous, with the first one ending in a complicated circular pattern. Turn 1 is a third gear corner taken at about 175 km/h, leading to Turn 2, which is a similar, tighter turn back round to the left. This is the venue's fifth outing on the Formula 1 calendar, and we've seen different winners for the previous four races. However, three of them have been Ferraris. Something to watch out for this weekend.

We've just passed Turn 6, which is something of a hairpin, taken in second gear, but with plenty of run off for any mistakes. In fact, as a new track, Shanghai boasts a vast amount of run off areas and gravel traps – something Lewis Hamilton is all too aware of.

Last year at Fuji we saw a downpour, and this year it was mostly dry. Last year at Shanghai we saw more wet weather, and so will this year be dry? The early forecasts look like the clouds will creep in and we could see some precipitation by Sunday.

Now we are rounding the second twisty set of curves to lead onto the ridiculously long back straight. A good exit from the right hand bend is really important to maximise speeds on the straight. As we saw in Fuji last weekend, the best place for overtaking is at the end, making the most of the slip stream, and braking early into the corner. On this track, speeds can get over 325 km/h, so every metre counts.

The last corner is a sharp left hand bend to lead onto the start/finish straight. Pole position in 2007 was Lewis Hamilton in the McLaren with 1 minute 35.908 seconds.

Christine: That's all for this week. Don't forget that Live Commenting awaits all who are free during any of the sessions over the Grand Prix weekend. A thread is usually opened about half an hour before the action starts, and we'll be there Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I'd love to see you there, so visit Sidepodcast.com to join in the fun.