



Inside Track – Kuala Lumpur Preview

[Opening credits]

Christine: Welcome to the second edition of Inside Track brought to you by Sidepodcast. This year, the Formula 1 season gets off to a hectic start, so there's barely time to catch our breath before F1 descends upon Malaysia. Let's see what's in store for the drivers in Kuala Lumpur this weekend.

Coming up we look back at what happened in Malaysia in 2007, we hear some driver's thoughts on racing there this year, and we lap the Sepang International Circuit. But first, a quick recap of the results from Australia last week.

Christine – Voiceover

As races go, the Australian one could not have been a better start to the 2008 season.

Only seven drivers actually managed to complete race distance, Lewis Hamilton leading the way from pole position to the chequered flag. He was joined on the podium by Heidfeld and Rosberg, who enjoyed his first time up there.

Alonso pipped Kovalainen to 4th after a fierce battle out on track and Nakajima was the only other points scorer to actually get his car to the end of the race.

The Ferrari engine in Bourdais' Toro Rosso gave up just 3 laps from the end, and Raikkonen's engine fared no better, but as there were no other finishers, he still left with 1 point.

That leaves the driver's championship in the same order as the finishers, Lewis Hamilton on 10 points, Heidfeld on 8, and Rosberg on 6. Alonso picks up 5 points, whilst Kovalainen gets 4.

The constructor's championship gets off to a flying start for McLaren who lead the way with 14 points, Williams pick up 9, with BMW behind them on 8. Renault get 5 and Toro Rosso leave with 2.

Chris: We had loads of great feedback from our Australia Preview, but we always want more. Send your compliments or complaints to christine@sidepodcast.com, visit the blog at Sidepodcast.com or call our voicemail 0121 28 TRACK.

A new addition to the site, introduced over the Australian race weekend, is live commenting. A thread is started about half an hour before all three free practice sessions, Qualifying and the race, and everyone is welcome to comment as events unfold. It's a great way to enhance the experience, and it lives on as a memento of each Grand Prix weekend. Visit Sidepodcast.com for more details.

[Footage of Malaysia. Cut to Trulli.]

Trulli: Malaysia is an extremely difficult race and a big challenge for any driver, but also technically for the car because it's quite a tough track and very hard conditions.

[Cut to Rosberg.]



Rosberg: Malaysia is one of the toughest races in the year. First of all it's quite a physical track because it's quite fast and there's a lot of quick corners. And on top of that, you have this huge amount of humidity in the air.

Chris: Last year in Australia, Ferrari ran away with the race, so Malaysia was McLaren's turn to come back fighting. Massa took pole position, but his early pit stop showed just how strong Alonso and Hamilton were. They soon had the race sewn up, Alonso on the top step of the podium, Hamilton second and Raikkonen rounding out the top three.

For the second race in a row, it was becoming painfully obvious that Renault were struggling without Alonso. Kovalainen improved on his Australia performance, but for the first time in a long time, there was no Renault in the final top ten qualifying session.

Christine – Voiceover

It is quite conceivable to admit that the first corner at Malaysia is one of the hardest out of all the circuits on the calendar this year. The track doubles back on itself to the right and then immediately to the left, meaning drivers can easily get tangled together. After the mayhem we saw in Australia, and with the possibility of rain looking higher than usual, Turn 1, Lap 1 will be a key corner.

After that initial rush, the drivers are rewarded with a pleasant straight where they can fly past the first timing sector and head to the next complex, Turns 4, 5 and 6. Getting the tyre choices right for this circuit will be tricky, not only do you face the combination of tight turns, sweeping curves and long straights, but the heat will play havoc on the rubber. Soaring temperatures and high humidity are tough on the engineering, but they also cause problems for the driver. Imagine having to make split-second decisions whilst sitting in a tub at 50 degrees C.

The straight running up to Turn 10 can see drivers up to top gear, almost 300 km/h, but then immediately dropping into 1st gear. Speeds can drop as low as 70 km/h. With no traction control, corners like this need the highest concentration.

The width of the track also aids in overtaking, and you can often see drivers fighting side by side for track position. Turn 12 is just such a corner, a wide and fast S bend, jinking left then right at over 240 km/h. Rounding the smooth curve to Turn 13, drivers have to get the exit from this corner right. The straight following is long, long, long, and if there are any mistakes, they'll find their nearest rival in the slipstream in the blink of an eye.

There's always the opportunity to nab the position back though, as the final corner of the circuit is a prime overtaking spot. The long straight culminates in a 180 degree hairpin, leading out onto the start/finish straight.

Pole position in 2007 was Felipe Massa in the Ferrari with 1 minute 35.043 seconds.

Chris: That's all for our preview, enjoy the race this weekend and don't forget to get in touch via Facebook, sidepodcast.com or call us on 0121 28 87225. Join us next time on Inside Track where we'll examine the Malaysian results and take a look at what to expect in Bahrain.

[End Credits.]