



Inside Track – Bahrain Preview

[Opening credits]

Christine: Welcome to Inside Track, our video coverage of the 2008 season. After a break in the schedule, the teams head over to the dusty Bahrain circuit for the last of the fly away races before the European season begins. Today we'll be looking at what to expect from the third round of the championship.

This week on Inside Track we're touring the circuit in Bahrain, looking back at the race in 2007, and hearing what Rosberg has to say about what to expect. But before that, here's a quick refresher of the results from Malaysia.

Christine – Voiceover

After the crazy start to the season in Australia, Malaysia was a calmer affair, although there was still plenty to talk about. Raikkonen took the win, having jumped Massa during the first round of pit stops. Kubica came in second, confirming BMW as a serious contender for the championship this year. Kovalainen rounded out the podium, making up for his mistake in Australia.

Trulli completed a great weekend in 4th, whilst Hamilton had to settle for fifth behind the Toyota, unable to get past Trulli's defensive driving. Heidfeld finished in 6th, and Webber finally managed to complete a race and score some points, taking 7th place. Alonso finished with 1 point after a difficult weekend.

Hamilton still leads the driver's championship with 14 points and Raikkonen has closed the gap considerably, now on 11. Heidfeld is also on 11, but behind Raikkonen thanks to the Ferrari's win. Kovalainen is on 10 points, Kubica on 8 and Rosberg on 6.

The constructor's championship is headed up by McLaren on 24 points, and consistent finishers BMW are second with 19. Ferrari are next with the 11 points solely from Raikkonen. Williams have 9 points, Renault 6 and Toyota have 5.

Chris: In the last Inside Track video, I promoted the live commenting feature on Sidepodcast.com. It was so popular, and so many of you commented that you actually broke the site. However, we have fixed that problem now and I am therefore encouraging you to return and enjoy Bahrain with us.

For each of the Free Practice sessions, qualifying and the race, a new thread is started on the Sidepodcast blog and you can comment along with us as we watch. It's a fun way to enhance your and our enjoyment of the races, take part in insightful conversations and make the most of the weekend.

[Footage of Bahrain. Cut to Rosberg.]

Rosberg: The best place for overtaking in Bahrain is probably at the end of the main straight into this hairpin, but then again I must say Bahrain is one of the best tracks for overtaking that we have in the year, so it's always a lot of fun to watch on TV.

[Cut to Christine.]



Chris: Last year's race in Bahrain was dominated by Ferrari. Felipe Massa succeeded in achieving pole position, fastest lap and the win, being barely hassled throughout the whole weekend. The majority of the talk, however, was on the emerging strength of the BMW guys, as Nick Heidfeld overtook Alonso in an impressive manoeuvre around the outside of Turn 4. This gave Heidfeld 4th and Kubica came in 6th. After the first three races in the 2007 season, Alonso, Hamilton and Raikkonen all had equal points in the drivers championship.

Christine – Voiceover

Going into the Bahrain Grand Prix, the FIA have decided to tweak qualifying once again. Following on from the near-miss situation in Malaysia, with cars on hot laps mixing with cars on a slow in-lap, a maximum lap time during qualifying will be imposed.

You won't find the drivers slow approaching the first corner though, having a long straight to gain some momentum, although they do have to drop right down to 1st gear and 80 km/h to make it round the sharp right hander. A kink to the left and then the right counts as turns two and three and then it's on to the next long straight.

The track in Bahrain has plenty of run-off areas, made of compacted sand which can basically seem like tarmac to a driver who has run wide out of a corner. The sand from further afield is less helpful though, making the track dusty and clogging up components in the car.

Turns 6 and 7 create a mid sector chicane, a 2nd gear S bend taken at just over 110 km/h. This leads onto Turn 8 which is a tight hairpin, turning almost 180 degrees before another short straight.

This first section of the circuit is very heavy on braking, which just adds to the problems at a high temperature track. Engine cooling, tyre wear and lack of grip are all major concerns when the set up guys start to think about their strategies for qualifying and the race. Being a relatively new track, there isn't masses of data available to teams, which is why it's thought that those who tested in Bahrain over the winter may have an advantage. That means Ferrari in particular, but also Toyota, are favourites to do well this weekend.

Now we're at Turn 11, a long sweeping left hand curve that leads almost immediately into the flowing right hander of Turn 12. Crossing the second sector timing line happens moments before reaching Turn 13, the second to last corner. Taken in 4th gear and at 200 km/h, there is a lot of runoff here.

Combining long straights with tight turns is a mainstay of most of the circuits on the grid, but Bahrain does seem to have more than its fair share of straight track. It means there are chances for second placed drivers to catch the slipstream of a car in front, and overtaking opportunities appear, especially when braking into the last corner.

Pole position in 2007 was Felipe Massa, with 1 minute 32.652 seconds.

Chris: So that should set up this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix for you nicely. Enjoy the race and the live commenting, and don't forget to get in touch with us via the usual methods. Call our voicemail on 0121 28 87225, visit the Facebook group or email me at christine@sidepodcast.com.

Join us next time on Inside Track where we'll review what happened in Bahrain and take a look ahead at what to expect from the first of the Spanish Grand Prix.

[End Credits.]