



Inside Track – Catalunya Preview

[Opening credits]

Christine: Hi everyone, welcome to Inside Track, the Sidepodcast video coverage of the 2008 season. A three week break in the action saw our teams hit the track in a Barcelona test, but now it's time for the Spanish race proper. Today we'll be looking at what to expect from the fourth round of the championship.

Coming up on Inside Track, we go back in time to find out what happened at the Spanish Grand Prix in 2007, we hear a driver's view of Barcelona, and of course, we tour one lap at the Circuit de Catalunya. But first let's remind ourselves what happened in the last race, in Bahrain.

Christine – Voiceover

Felipe Massa went into the third round of the 2008 season desperately needing some points. A couple of poor races meant his championship needed a kick start, and in Bahrain it got just that. He took the win, just ahead of team mate Kimi Raikkonen, with first time pole sitter Robert Kubica completing the podium lineup. Heidfeld put his BMW 4th, whilst Kovalainen was the only McLaren to pick up any points in 5th. Trulli continued to be consistent in 6th, and Webber and Rosberg rounded out the top 8.

The finishing order in Bahrain mixed up the championship standings somewhat, with Raikkonen taking the lead with 19 points to Heidfeld's 16. Next, Hamilton, Kubica and Kovalainen all sit on 14 points, with the order determined by previous results. Felipe Massa finally gets his name on the board and into the top 6 with 10 points.

The constructor's championship is headed up by BMW on 30 points, with Ferrari on 29 and McLaren on 28. A big gap then separates Williams, Toyota and Renault on 10, 8 and 6 points respectively.

Chris: Here at Sidepodcast, we make lots of shows to keep you entertained – this show, Inside Track, F1 Rewind, F1 Digest and more. If you want to know what's coming next, we may have just the thing for you. Accessible via the homepage is our new Upcoming section, featuring a calendar of all the shows you can expect in the near future.

Making maximum use of Google calendars, you can customise the way you view the schedule, by month, week or in a list. You can view more details about particular shows, and more importantly, you can synchronise it with your own Google calendar. You never have to miss another Sidepodcast show.

[Footage of Spain. Cut to Rosberg.]

Rosberg: It's not really an advantage for us to test in Barcelona before the race because everyone else test's there so in the end it just comes down to the same thing. But it's different because if you do test there the whole year, or very often, you're much more, much nearer to the optimum in set up of the car. So when you come to the race weekend, the procedure is a bit different, you're looking for really fine tuning the last bit of the setup, rather than on other tracks where you really need to find your way first.

[Cut to Christine.]



Chris: Although we're previewing this weekend's race, it's always worth a quick look back to last year, to see what our drivers were up against. In 2007, the Spanish Grand Prix saw the start of the Hamilton/Alonso inter-team battle, as the rookie got the better of the defending champion on the first lap of his home race. Alonso did manage to finish third, just behind Hamilton, but only after Raikkonen retired on the 9th lap. Kimi left the circuit almost immediately afterward, in a surprisingly un-Ferrari like action.

Christine – Voiceover

With the key corner of any circuit being the first turn on the first lap, the Circuit de Catalunya makes us wait a disappointingly long time to experience it. By the time the drivers have completed the initial long straight and reached the 2nd gear turn 1, the pecking order is most likely to already be established.

With that in mind, it's worth pointing out that the first sequence of corners aren't particularly challenging either, with a kink right and left followed by a sweeping curve of epic proportions. The 4th corner turns drivers back the way they came in 3rd gear, before the tighter bends begin to appear.

The drivers know this track like the back of their hands, so much testing is done here in the off-season and during the summer months as well. There is plenty of data available to teams and any obvious mistakes can be particularly embarrassing.

Almost halfway through the lap now, we're heading to Turn 7, taken at about 170 km/h, which then leads to Turn 8, a 4th gear right hander that sees speeds about 220 km/h. This leads onto the second longest straight of the course.

Whilst the Spanish Grand Prix remains incredibly popular, in part due to Alonso's success of recent years, a new competitor has sprung up in the shape of the European GP in Valencia. Although it has yet to take place, the race in Valencia is building up plenty of anticipation and excitement. Barcelona has nothing to worry about though, with a contract lasting until 2016.

I would love to tell you about the next bit of track that was revised last year to make things a bit more exciting. However, our animation is unfortunately not quite that up to date, and to be honest, the new kink in the track didn't make that much difference anyway. We'll just move on.

Pole position in 2007 was Felipe Massa in the Ferrari with 1 minute 21.421 seconds.

Chris: That's all for this preview. Enjoy the race this weekend, and remember to visit Sidepodcast.com to join in the live commenting for all Free Practice sessions, qualifying and the race itself. You can always leave us a voicemail with your thoughts as well, the number you need is 0121 28 TRACK, that's 0121 28 87225.

Next time on Inside Track, we'll have a look at the results of the Spanish Grand Prix and preview Round 5 of the 2008 season, in Turkey.

[End Credits.]