



Inside Track – Monte Carlo Preview

[Opening credits]

Christine: Welcome to Inside Track. This is Sidepodcast's preview of the upcoming Monaco GP. After the race in Turkey was full of strategy and overtaking, will this street circuit be able to step up to the challenge?

This week on Inside Track, we review the results from Turkey and check in with the championships, we hear a drivers view, and of course, take one lap around the Monaco Street Circuit,

Christine – Voiceover

Massa led the charge in Turkey, from pole position to the chequered flag, to take his third win at the circuit. Hamilton came in a close second, despite being on a different three-stopping strategy to everyone else. Raikkonen took the third step on the podium, beating Kubica who had to settle for fourth. Heidfeld took 5th, and Alonso finished in 6th.

The driver's championship remains relatively close, and Raikkonen is on top with 35 points. Massa and Hamilton share second with 28 points, and the BMW boys are next on 24 and 20, Kubica ahead of Heidfeld. Kovalainen rounds out the top six with 14 points. Ferrari are pulling away in the constructor's championship with 63 points. BMW and McLaren are in a battle with each other 44 to 42. Williams, Red Bull and Toyota have 13, 10 and 9 points respectively.

Chris: Sidepodcast is making use of a new service called drop.io. The idea of the site is that it's totally open to everyone to leave audio, video, links and pictures, in our case Formula 1 related. So far we've been using it to enhance the live commenting by posting screenshots of the official timings, and videos of important race moments. We've also been using it to display our helmet designs from JensonButton.com, but that's a whole other story. Drop.io is so good, that I'm actually using a less open version as my own personal F1 lifestream. I'm writing some notes, posting pictures and sharing links that grab my attention, plus I got the best name. Visit drop.io/formula1 to follow me.

[Footage of Monaco. Cut to Nico Rosberg.]

Nico: The track starts to be built up, I think about two months before the actual Grand Prix, so you start seeing bits and pieces. The kerb arriving there, and the barrier, and it always brings up memories and thoughts when you're driving through. Oh, soon I'm gonna be here with my F1 car, racing through the streets.

[Cut to Richard Cregan.]

Richard: You know, Monaco, one of the greatest races of the year. I think it's an icon in terms of Formula 1. I think you watch any driver do a flying lap in Monaco and I believe they earn their salary for the year here. So, for me it's a great place to be. I think it's something special in terms of car preparation, in terms of the environment. It's a difficult place to work because it's not so much space, you have quite a cramped working area, but you still have the great atmosphere of being in Monaco. You know, the glitz of it all, the glamour of it all, combine that with F1 racing and you generate an enthusiasm, a passion that you probably don't get in too many circuits at the moment in Formula 1.



[Cut to Dieter Gass]

Dieter: It is a circuit which is mechanically very demanding because there's obviously a lot of gear changes because you are always moving in the lower part of the gear ratios. That means you are basically having a lot of gear changes between every corner, shifting up and down, and it's generally very demanding as well, for the brakes. Because of the low average speed and because of the lack of straight lines where it would cool down your brakes, consequently the average temperatures of the brakes are very, very high, which means you have to be very careful about your brake cooling.

[Cut to Christine.]

Chris: Before we get on to this year at Monaco, let's remind ourselves what happened at the glamorous event in 2007. Fernando Alonso took the win, with Hamilton close behind him, but McLaren were far from happy. Things were already beginning to appear strained within the team, and in the post-race press conference, Hamilton hinted that he felt his team mate had been given preferential treatment. The Ferrari's struggled with their longer wheelbase round the tight corners, and this was compounded by Kimi's mistake in qualifying. Eerily reminiscent of Schumacher's controversial parking incident, Raikkonen clouted a barrier and pulled to a halt at the Rascasse corner, effectively ruining his race weekend. Meanwhile, Fisichella had a good showing in his Renault, finishing fourth.

Now let's take a look at one lap around the Monaco street circuit to see what our teams are up against.

Chris – Voiceover

Monaco is all glitz and glamour but it's the tricky circuit that keeps us coming back for more. As ever, the first corner is the most important and it's also practically immediate. A tight right hander, taken in second gear and just over 100 km/h, it leads onto an uphill straight.

The buildings towering over the circuit are steeping in as much history as the GP. The first Monaco race was in 1929, but it hosted the second ever world championship race in 1950. Even back then it was tricky, with a first lap accident taking out nine cars.

The tight right hander of Mirabeau leads down to the 180 degree hairpin, with speeds down to just 45 km/h, and the lowest gear you can find. This corner, and the many twists in Monaco, mean plenty of strain on gearboxes, so watch out for those on their second or third race. There's no time to relax, either, as coming out of the hairpin, and rounding the corner at Portier leads you immediately into the tunnel. It sweeps to the right in top gear, and you'll sometimes find a driver coming out the other end with a tyre pointing in the wrong direction. Across the second timing line and into the Nouvelle Chicane, this is the harbour front.

Although the corners are difficult, and there's little run off area, drivers can be thankful that this circuit has low g-forces compared to others. Coming from Turkey, where they were running anti-clockwise, it will probably be a blessed relief.

The harbour front has been noticeable in recent years for the enormous floating motor home that Red Bull turn up with, pieced together until it towers over the nearby yachts. Some famous faces gather at this end of the track.

Now we are approaching the infamous La Rascasse corner. Michael Schumacher's dodgy qualifying performance has steeped this corner in controversial history, and Raikkonen will be looking to avoid repeating the mistake that left him in the same precarious position last year. Now it's just a relative straight to cross the start/finish line.



Pole position in 2007 was Fernando Alonso in the McLaren with 1 minute 15.726 seconds.

Chris: Early weather forecasts are predicting rain for some of the weekend, which should stir things up nicely. If you're next to a computer when the action is on, join Sidepodcast.com for the live commenting threads. I'll be there through all three free practice sessions, qualifying and the race, so stop by and say hi. Don't forget, though, that Free Practice is on Thursday in Monaco. Enjoy the race and I'll see you next time on Inside Track.

[End Credits.]

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