



## F1 Brazil Blog – F1 at Interlagos

This is a revelation. For the first time in my Formula 1 career, I can look out the windows of the press room and see nearly all the track. And despite Hockenheim's legendary press room in a tent, Interlagos is the only circuit that's seen me reaching for my ear plugs indoors, so loud are the passing engines.

You really do feel a part of the action here in a way that no other circuit has been able to match.

And it's a good thing, too – the TVs in the media centre keep losing signal, so if it weren't for the great view of the track, we'd all be writing blind.

So, practice. As ever, there's not much to learn from Friday morning. It's installation laps a go-go as everyone tries to find the perfect set-up for the weekend ahead. But what will the weekend bring in terms of weather? Last night I was told there was a 90 percent chance of rain for Sunday, and we're expecting scattered showers today and tomorrow. Whether or not those showers will fall when the cars are on track is another matter entirely...

Toro Rosso are the first to set a timed lap, as usual, and are dethroned as soon as someone else completes a timed lap, again as usual. This time it's Renault's Vitaly Petrov who steals Sebastien Buemi's thunder, so there's a bit of variety there.

Surprise of the morning is that Virgin have chosen to give Jerome D'Ambrosio a run in Lucas di Grassi's car. It's not too surprising, given that D'Ambrosio looks almost certain to have di Grassi's seat next year, but it is slightly strange that the team have chosen not to capitalise on having a Brazilian driver at the Brazilian Grand Prix. Especially when rookies need all the running time they can get.

McLaren have brought a raft of new parts to Interlagos, carrying on with their stated intention to throw everything – including the kitchen sink, as Paddy Lowe famously said – at winning the drivers' title. The team have not been as lucky with their late season development as they were last year, and a poor result this weekend would put Lewis Hamilton out of the running for the championship. Unless Red Bull have a repeat of Korea and Fernando Alonso's engine blows, that is.

But the problem with bringing in new parts is that you have to spend all morning tweaking them, thanks to the abolishment of in-season testing. And that gets in the way of setting timed laps, as drivers endlessly circulate, getting the feel for new parts and then reporting back to their engineers. With the session nearing its midpoint, we have yet to see a timed lap from any of the four serious championship contenders. Or Jenson Button, who's in the fight with the longest of long shots.

Ferrari have spent the season using Friday morning to do longer runs with more fuel, disguising their real pace and learning vital lessons for the weekend ahead. Based on Massa and Alonso's current lap times, it seems that the Scuderia's strategy has not been changed this weekend. Expect to see some headline-grabbing times from the team this afternoon, especially where Massa is concerned. The Paulista has taken pole at the past three Brazilian Grand Prix that he's raced in, and the F10 is much faster in qualifying than it was a few months ago.

And now that the championship contenders are out on track, they're dominating the leaderboards. At least, the Red Bull pair and Hamilton are – all three drivers have spent time in P1, and are lapping within two-tenths of a second of each other. Alonso is nursing engines at the moment, to ensure that he makes it through Sunday's race unscathed, and so is unable to push as hard as the competition. Not that times make much of a difference today. It is only practice, after all.

Sebastian Vettel is currently on a longish run, and as his fuel weight falls, so do his times. Where he was originally 0.2s faster than Hamilton, he is currently half a second ahead, although the pair are the only drivers to have lapped in the 1.12s. Mark Webber is currently in the pits, waiting for his next run.

You will hardly be surprised to learn that Brazil is a hot country. Funny that. And with the air at 28 degrees and the track temperature at 42 degrees, you will be even less surprised to learn that the drivers are complaining of tyre wear, particularly graining at the front. Conditions should improve as

the track continues to rubber in, but the expected rain could change all that overnight, making Sunday even more interesting than usual. But that's just hypothesising – no one knows when to expect the rain, as some fell yesterday afternoon, surprising everyone.

As Webber continues his run he's edging ever closer to Hamilton's P2 time; the Australian has shaved off 0.2s so far and counting. But the Red Bull driver is still 0.667s off his teammate's pace, although the margin is dropping with every lap. As I typed Webber closed the gap a bit more, and is now 0.482s off Vettel's time, 0.03s faster than Hamilton. And with that, the Red Bull driver returns to the pits, leaving Alonso the only title chaser out on track.

Further down the championship standings, things are much as you would expect. Robert Kubica is in P4, behind Jenson Button and just ahead of Nico Rosberg. Rubens Barrichello is currently splitting the two Mercedes drivers, one-tenth faster than ex-Ferrari teammate Michael Schumacher. Engine-poor Nick Heidfeld is just ahead of Kamui Kobayashi, who rounds out the top ten.

Bringing up the rear are the six drivers from the new teams, headed by Jarno Trulli, who is nearly half a second faster than Heikki Kovalainen. Bruno Senna is back of the pack, 0.8s slower than Christian Klien, who has been drafted in as a temporary replacement for Sakon Yamamoto. Still no sign of the ever-popular Karun Chandhok.

The Toro Rosso pair are just ahead of the backmarkers on the timesheets, but with a margin of over a second. Just ahead of Buemi and Alguersuari are Liuzzi and Petrov, who has just had a massive off at Laranjinha. The young Russian has pace, but comes with a hefty repair bill from all his crashes. The session continues, thanks to a massive run-off area.

With just over five minutes remaining, the track fills up with drivers keen to do their final runs on soft tyres, and hopefully grab a headline or two. But despite their best efforts, there's been little change at the top of the timesheets, and not much in the middle. Most improved is Adrian Sutil, who finishes the session in P9.

Alonso pulled over to the side of the track with an apparent technical failure as the session drew to a close. No word yet on the cause, but it didn't look like engine failure.

F1 timings (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:12.328s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:12.810s
3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:12.845s
4. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:13.267s
5. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1:13.370s
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:13.516s
7. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:13.546s
8. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:13.643s
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1:18.918s
10. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1:14.000s
11. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:14.004s
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1:14.155s
13. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:14.246s
14. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:14.267s
15. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1:14.370s
16. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1:14.487s
17. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:14.618s
18. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1:14.734s
19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1:15.603s
20. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:15.860s
21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1:16.057s
22. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1:16.707s
23. Christian Klien (HRT) 1:16.839s
24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1:17.360s

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## F1 Brazil Blog – FP2 at Interlagos

Make no mistake – the afternoon practice session is the morning on steroids. What feels like seconds into FP2 and we've got times on the board from nearly the entire pack. Installation laps quickly give way to timed efforts, and the noise outside the press room is like one endless sonic boom as the cars roar past.

Fernando Alonso ended FP1 by pulling over onto the side of the track; the team were concerned about his engine and decided they'd rather be safe than sorry. Ferrari had already planned to swap engines on Alonso's machine between sessions, thanks to the high mileage already completed by the device in question.

There is a chance of rain towards the end of FP2, which goes some way to explaining the heavy traffic on track from the start of the session. But for the moment it's warm, despite the gathering clouds and increasing wind, with the air temperature at 30 degrees and the track temperature at 43 degrees, only slightly warmer than this morning.

HRT's sometime driver Christian Klien is the first man to complete a timed lap, but I hardly need to tell you that he loses the top slot as soon as other cars begin to cross the line. Lewis Hamilton is first of the championship contenders to take the top spot, with a 1:13.048s, but he is dethroned by Mark

Webber's 1:12.923s. Fernando Alonso's first effort is a P4-worthy 1:13.457s, while Sebastian Vettel has yet to complete a timed lap.

Interlagos master Felipe Massa has showed his hand with a 1:13.180s, putting the Brazilian in P3. Now that the Ferrari pair have completed their morning heavy fuel runs, the Scuderia are beginning to show their hand.

Vettel's first timed lap sees the German cross the line in P4, his 1:13.342s puts him ahead of Alonso but behind Webber and Hamilton. But the next attempt, a 1:12.934s, is good enough for P2, behind Webber's 1:12.387s. There has been a bit of a war of words in the press between the Red Bull pair: both are keen to assert themselves as the team's one and only championship contender going into the season finale at Abu Dhabi. Expect mind-blowing lap times from them both as they battle for pole.

Further down the pack, Jenson Button has been pushed down to P9 by Michael Schumacher, Robert Kubica, and Nick Heidfeld. Button's early 1:13.859s saw him near the top of the timesheets, but the Brit is now 1.5s off the Red Bulls' blistering pace.

Schumacher's early laps have been an improvement on this morning, while Nico Rosberg is currently struggling to match his teammate for pace. Heidfeld's experience of Interlagos appears to be paying off; the Sauber driver's best result here was a P3 in 2001.

Half an hour into the track and things are relatively peaceful – only half of the drivers are currently circulating, with the rest in the pits, feeding back data to their engineers. After an intense battle between the two Red Bull drivers, both have taken a break. Webber is currently on top, but Vettel's times were improving lap by lap, ending with a 1:12.578s that sees him 0.2s slower than the Australian, who won here last year.

Down at the back of the pack, Lucas di Grassi is slowest of the new teams, lapping in 1:17.183s, 4.7s off the pace. Given that the rookie driver is finding his feet around Interlagos this afternoon, it is a decent effort, and he is improving with every lap.

Back on track, Lewis Hamilton has broken through the 1:12s barrier, putting a 1:12.940s on the board. It keeps him safe – for the moment – from the approaching Ferraris, but he is still half a second slower than Webber and nearly four-tenths off Vettel's time. Button has managed to improve his place in the standings, posting 1:13.366s that pushes Alonso down to P6.

There's some chopping and changing in the middle of the pack, with Kubica getting the better of Schumacher and Rubens Barrichello jumping into the top ten, but the session is fairly static for the moment, despite the number of cars out on track. That can be explained by the move to hard tyres, which are better in the long-term but do not offer the single-lap speed of the softer compound.

And with only half an hour remaining of the afternoon practice session, the biggest surprise comes in the form of Nick Heidfeld, who jumps up to P5 with a 1:13.222s set on the softer tyre compound, pushing Button into P6 and Alonso into P7. Both Button and Alonso have been in the pits for some time,

Massa manages to unseat Hamilton from P3 with a 1:12.667s, but is then seen limping around the track with an apparent transmission failure. Ferrari will be hoping that the transmission failure will not have had knock-on problems with the engine – the Brazilian was already on his ninth of the season, and should he need to use a new one this weekend, Massa can expect a 10-place grid penalty.

And while things have been going wrong for Massa, they've been going right for Webber. The Australian driver crosses the line in 1:12.072s, making life even more difficult for the rest of the paddock.

Robert Kubica is out on the options and making the most of the speed advantage. The Renault driver set a 1:12.882s, which was briefly good enough for P4. But then Lewis Hamilton crossed the line in 1:12.656s, and Alonso in 1:12.588s, shaking things up at last. For the moment Webber leads from Vettel, then it's Alonso, Hamilton, Massa, and Kubica. The gap from Vettel to Massa is barely a tenth – it's tight out there on the options, which could make qualifying more interesting than usual.

Alonso's next lap sees him push Vettel down to P3, but no one is currently able to touch Webber, who has an advantage of 0.256s. That gap is growing ever smaller, however, thanks to Alonso's 1:12.328s. Vettel is currently in the pits, and yet to do a flying lap on the softer tyre.

And it is with the soft tyre that Vettel manages to unseat his teammate, breaking into the 1:11s at the same time. The young German crosses the line in 1:11.968s, 0.104s faster than Webber.

Ferrari are now muttering that a hydraulics problem could be to blame for Massa's earlier stop on track. No official confirmation yet...

Lucas di Grassi has done sterling work this afternoon, working his way up from the bottom of the pack. The Brazilian rookie is now in P21 with a 1:15.433, while teammate Timo Glock is last on the list, 4.182s off Vettel's pace.

As the clock counts down to the final minutes of FP2, the track is heaving. Vettel's time is not unassailable – it's around half a second off the lap record, set by Juan Pablo Montoya in 2004 (1:11.473s, fact-fans) – but is going to be pretty tough to beat. Even Vettel is well off his best sector times, never mind the rest of the pack.

Session over, and Vettel ends up on top. The only real drama in the closing seconds comes from Alguersuari and Schumacher; the latter cuts off the young Spaniard during an attempted overtake, and the Toro Rosso driver ends up powersliding down the track.

FP2 timings (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:11.968s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:12.072s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:12.328s
4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:12.656s
5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:12.677s

6. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.12.882s
  7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.13.206s
  8. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.13.222s
  9. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.13.333s
  10. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.13.346s
  11. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.13.520s
  12. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.13.610s
  13. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.13.725s
  14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.13.741s
  15. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.13.818s
  16. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.14.045s
  17. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.14.304s
  18. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.14.578s
  19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.14.984s
  20. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.15.101s
  21. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.15.433s
  22. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.16.070s
  23. Christian Klien (HRT) 1.16.082s
  24. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.16.150s
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## F1 Brazil Blog – FP3 at Interlagos

São Paulo is currently soggy, but not drenched. The sky is leaking bits of drizzle, but the torrents of Friday night have long since disappeared. Here at Interlagos, the track is green and wet, and the cars are shooting up plumes of water as they leave the pitlane.

With only an hour in which to practice, and a lot of rubber to try and lay down, cars exit the pitlane for their installation laps as soon as it opens. Extreme wets are the name of the game for the moment, although there will probably be a move to inters before FP3 comes to an end.

Set-up work is going to be key this morning, as teams need to find the perfect balance between a qualifying session expected to be run in the rain and a race likely to be in the dry. Fingers are crossed in the press room for rain this afternoon, as any variety at this stage of play could shake up the championship even further.

Timo Glock is the first man to put a time on the board, roughly 14 seconds down on the best time set in the dry on Friday.

The rain seems to have abated for now, and drivers are reporting no problems with standing water or aquaplaning. Interlagos may have its downsides where glamour's concerned, but the track dries more quickly than most. Always a bonus. Inters should be coming out soon, but remember – teams need to preserve as much fresh rubber as they can for qualies this afternoon, which everyone expects to be wet.

McLaren are reportedly hedging their bets with Lewis Hamilton; the team are said to be planning a wet set-up for the British driver to give him the best chance in qualifying. That could hamper his chances in Sunday's race, should it be run in the dry, but the team are confident in his ability to drive around any set-up problems.

It looks as though Hamilton's not yet hit that sweet spot, however. Now that nearly all the drivers have put times on the board, the Brit is towards the top of the pack but still only in P4. Best of the bunch – for now – is Mark Webber, who is leading the timesheets with a 1.20.337s. Webber is quickly supplanted by Fernando Alonso, who crosses the line in 1.20.200s. Conditions may be improving out there, but times are still eight or nine seconds down on Friday's best efforts.

Alonso and Hamilton break into the 1.19s within nanoseconds of each other, with the McLaren driver briefly topping the timesheets with a 1.19.912s, before the Ferrari man bests him with a 1.19.791s. Lap times will begin to collapse from this point onwards, as the racing line is now dry enough for action.

Nico Hulkenberg is fighting for his seat this weekend, and the German rookie is doing it in style. The Williams driver is currently sitting in P6, ahead of Robert Kubica, Felipe Massa, and Sebastian Vettel, although the leaderboards are changing all the time.

And with that, Interlagos master Massa tops the boards with a 1.19.735s, and Vettel leaps up to P4 with a 1.20.111s. Sebastien Buemi has pushed Webber down to P6, while championship long-shot Jenson Button is in P12 with a 1.21.173s.

The rain has started up again, with half the pack on track and the rest in the pits. Of those currently running, there seems to be a pretty even split between inters and full wets, as no one's yet quite sure how to make the most of the ever-changing conditions. Vettel is the only title challenger currently doing the rounds, but the young German still needs to break through the 1.20s barrier. And he's done it, crossing the line in 1.19.942s, a time that sees him hold position in P4.

But not for long! Vettel goes fastest with a 1.19.500s. His title rivals will be taking note – expect to see another pitlane exodus in the not too distant future.

Impressively, despite the rain, we've not really seen any spins or offs. After Korea, these conditions are child's play.

Jenson Button is back on track. His long sojourn in the pits has seen the British driver move down from P5 to P17 as others have made the most of the improving conditions. Button's first timed lap of this run is looking smooth, although he's already 1.1s off Vettel's pace before the lap is complete. Crossing the line at last, Button stays in P17. His second timed lap sees the Brit improve to P15, 1.1s slower than Vettel's pace-setting best lap.

Button keeps on pushing, and moves up to P7, but can't break through that L20s barrier. There's still 15 minutes to go on a drying track, so it should happen eventually, especially now that his only company on track is Michael Schumacher and Jaime Alguersuari.

McLaren are preparing Lewis Hamilton for another run, and are fitting a new rear wing in the process. Hamilton needs to find half a second to best the competition, but 0.8s would see him comfortably at the top for now. In his first seasons in Formula 1 the young British driver impressed with his prowess in the rain – can he show off those skills once more?

The track is now eerily quiet, as the brains on the pit wall want to save rubber for qualifying. After all, a good time in practice may get headlines, but it doesn't mean anything in the championship. But a good starting position for tomorrow's race could mean the difference between taking the fight to Abu Dhabi or giving up on the way to the airport.

And with five minutes to go, Hamilton moves up to P2, only 0.036s slower than Vettel. Massa, Alonso, and Vettel are all still in the pits, so there's no real competition at the top of the timesheets, but Hamilton is making hay while the track dries. The new rear wing appears to be doing the trick, although finding that extra tenth or two is proving elusive. So much for rain opening up the field for Red Bull's rivals...

Three minutes to go, and there are so many cars on track that it's beginning to look like rush hour in São Paulo. The Ferrari drivers will be staying in the garage until the session ends; they have done a good enough job and need to preserve their engines.

Hulkenberg, who was doing so well earlier, has been pushed down to P13. The Williams rookie is heading out for his final run of the session, fighting for his F1 future.

Robert Kubica has just crossed the line in 1.19.191s, blowing everyone else out of the water. When he gets it right, Kubica makes it look so easy, the mark of a future champion. But with twenty cars out on track, and the racing line vastly improved since the session began, will the Renault driver be able to hold on to the top slot until the chequered flag?

Yes, is the answer to that one.

Quite a few surprises thrown up by the rain, all in all. Mark Webber ended FP3 down in P11, while Vitaly Petrov (P6) and Sebastian Buemi (P7) managed to blow a host of more experienced drivers out of the water. Nick Heidfeld, who did so well yesterday, was the slowest man from an established team, and Jenson Button was six-tenths behind his teammate.

Should these conditions persist for the next few hours, qualifying could well provide the shake-up we've all been hoping for...

FP3 timings (unofficial)

1. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.19.191s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.19.500s
3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.19.536s
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.19.735s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.19.791s
6. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.19.887s
7. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.20.009s
8. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.20.056s
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.20.164s
10. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.20.320s
11. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.20.337s
12. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.20.421s
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.20.452s
14. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.20.535s
15. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.20.541s
16. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.20.546s
17. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.20.613s
18. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.20.985s
19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.22.326s
20. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.22.449s
21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.22.874s
22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.23.194s
23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.23.358s
24. Christian Klien (HRT) 1.23.650s

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Q1 at Interlagos

Expect a wet and wild qualifying session, people. It's currently dry in Brazil, but the track is wet, thanks to a number of showers in the hours since FP3. Teams are predicting more rain to fall towards the end of Q1, and not just a shower.

Everyone's pouring out of the pits and onto the track, desperate to set a decent time before the weather scuppers their plans. No one wants a repeat of the Malaysia qualifying debacle, which saw Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso – among others – drop out in Q1. Although if all four of the championship contenders had to fight from the back on Sunday, we'd be in for a pretty spectacular race.

Sebastien Buemi is first to set a time, crossing the line in 1.22.744s. But Mark Webber quickly bests that with a 1.21.272s, a real indicator of the conditions on track. Nico Hulkenberg shaves two-tenths off Webber's time, and goes briefly top of the pops before Michael Schumacher beats him. Next lap, and Hulkenberg's back on top.

There's traffic galore out there, and timing is everything.

This is a real shoot-out, with positions changing non-stop and more action than you could shake a stick at. The Red Bull pair seem to be best in the wet for now, but Fernando Alonso shows them how it's done with a 1.19.842s.

In the danger zone at the bottom are both Sauber drivers: Timo Glock is currently in P16 and out of the dropout zone. But will it last? Heidfeld pulls himself up to P13, but it remains to be seen whether or not he's built up enough of a safety net to stay in the running for Q2.

Everyone's having off-track moments, exploring the run-off areas, but the shakiest moment came at the hands of the Force India pair, who came very close to ending the team's chances with a massive crash. Adrian Sutil managed to avoid his teammate at the last minute, but both men are currently at risk, with Sutil in P18 and Tonio Liuzzi in P17.

Top of the pack are the four championship challengers, followed closely by Nico Hulkenberg and Sebastian Buemi.

At the moment, the session's looking more predictable than expected, with all six drivers from the new teams in the dropout zone. Massa could be said to be out of position: the Brazilian driver who is usually so adept at Interlagos is currently in P8.

With three minutes remaining, it's the usual suspects in the dropout zone, with Liuzzi, Sutil, Schumacher, and Alguersuari all at risk of joining the new boys. There's been constant change at the top of the charts, thanks to the falling rain that is now complicating matters on track, but the real interest in Q1 is the boys at the bottom.

Except, that is, for Kamui Kobayashi, who pulls off another banzai performance and pops up in P4 with a 1.19.741s lap, putting him ahead of Alonso (among others). Schumacher has saved his skin with a 1.19.842s, and the German driver is now well out of the danger zone. Sutil and Liuzzi are trading places, swapping between P17 and P18 like it's going out of fashion.

Alonso goes fastest with a 1.18.987s, and the chequered flag has fallen. More times still to come as those on laps cross the line, but all of the championship contenders have made it into Q2, with Hamilton the slowest in P10.

Dropout zone

18. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.20.830s
19. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.22.130s
20. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.22.250s
21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.22.378s
22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.22.810s
23. Christian Klien (HRT) 1.23.083s
24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.23.796s

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Q2 at Interlagos

Despite the rain that started to fall in the middle of Q1 – not as heavy as feared – there were few surprises on track in Q1. Will the continuing rain shake things up a bit for Q2? Fernando Alonso was fastest in the first session, while Lewis Hamilton – usually so good in the wet – was slowest of the men fighting it out for the championship.

The track is undoubtedly drier than it was, which will not be helping Hamilton. McLaren hedged their bets with a wet weather set-up for qualies, and so far the rain has not been cooperating. Despite this, the British driver is currently in P3, behind Mark Webber and Fernando Alonso. As I type, Michael Schumacher matches Webber's time and goes second, pushing everyone else down one.

Robert Kubica repeats his morning feat and goes fastest with a 1.19.677s, before being beaten into second place by Rubens Barrichello. Sebastian Vettel then beats them both, and the order changes every time someone crosses the line.

With times now set by all the drivers, the dropout zone is made up of Nico Hulkenberg, Vitaly Petrov, Sebastien Buemi, Jaime Alguersuari, Nick Heidfeld, Tonio Liuzzi, and Nico Rosberg.

Webber and Vettel's private battle for the top is rudely crashed by Kubica, who goes P2 and splits the pair. Barrichello, who was on pole here last year, is showing a strong run of form, currently sitting pretty in P4. Rosberg pops up in P9, pushing Felipe Massa into the dropout zone. But no one's safe, with P8 through P17 split by a second.

Both Massa and Button are currently in the dropout zone, thanks to some fast laps from Hulkenberg and Rosberg, but Massa is on a flyer and looks like he could save his bacon with this run. Hamilton goes third fastest as his teammate begins his own fight for life flyer.

Barely two minutes remaining, and it's all to play for. Massa's lap put Rosberg back in the dropout zone, but then Button pushes Massa back into the P11 danger spot. It's an all-out battle for survival between Button, Massa, and Kobayashi as the chequered flag falls with laps still to complete.

Massa goes P10, pushing Button into P11, and Q2 ends with Button the highest-profile scalp claimed.

Dropout zone (times unofficial)

11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.19.288s
12. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.19.385s
13. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.19.408s
14. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.19.581s
15. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.19.847s
16. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.19.899s
17. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.20.357s

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Q3 at Interlagos

With Jenson Button out in Q2, the 2009 world champion will almost certainly be relegated to a supporting role for the next two races. But what other surprises does qualifying have in store here at Interlagos? The next ten minutes could prove decisive for the championship.

No rain is expected for the next half hour, and the track is as good as bone dry. Fernando Alonso is the first to begin a timed lap, and he crosses the line in 1.17.794s, setting the benchmark for the afternoon. Mark Webber bests him with a 1.17.482, but he is beaten by Lewis Hamilton, who crosses the line with a 1.17.212s.

Michael Schumacher is looking like a force to be reckoned with; the seven-time world champion is currently sitting ahead of the Red Bulls in P2.

The session half run already, there's a quick trip to the pits for fresh rubber while everyone prepares for their final two attempts at grabbing pole. Slicks are the order of the day for Fernando Alonso, who is obviously confident in the drier track. But the Spaniard is not alone – Interlagos looks dry and the time has come to do whatever it takes to secure a decent grid position for tomorrow's race.

Robert Kubica misses the track completely, and has a safe but time-damaging tour of the run-off area.

Hamilton fails to beat his own best time, and Webber runs off track, damaging his own chances of pole. Nico Hulkenberg goes fastest, with a 1.16.373s, but Hamilton takes it back with a 1.13.274s. Vettel crosses the line in P3, and there's only time for one more lap each for the lucky ones.

Alonso goes fastest with a 1.15.989, and Hulkenberg beats him into P2 with a 1.15.462s. Hamilton's final attempt puts the Brit in P2, but Webber pushes him into P3 before Vettel grabs P2 and moves Webber and Hamilton to the second row.

Hulkenberg grabs pole with a 1.14.470s, totally shaking things up in the paddock and on track. Looks like he might not be losing that Williams seat after all...

Provisional grid

1. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.14.470s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.15.519s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.15.637s
4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.15.747s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.15.989s
6. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.16.203s
7. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.16.552s
8. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.16.925s
9. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.17.101s
10. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.17.656s
11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.19.288s
12. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.19.385s
13. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.19.408s
14. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.19.581s
15. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.19.899s
16. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.20.357s
17. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.22.130s
18. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.22.250s
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.22.378s
20. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.19.847s\*
21. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.22.810s
22. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.20.830s\*\*
23. Christian Klien (HRT) 1.23.083s
24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.23.796s

\* Buemi, who qualified 15th, will start from P20, thanks to a five-place grid penalty left over from Korea.

\*\* Sutil, who qualified 18th, will start from P22, thanks to a five-place grid penalty left over from Korea. The order of the penalties puts Sutil up one (I think).

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## F1 Brazil Blog – The post-qualifying (non) analysis

What a qualifying session that turned out to be. I don't think there was a person on the planet who expected Nico Hulkenberg to claim pole position, putting Williams at the head of the pack for the first time in more than five years.

Hulkenberg's lap for pole is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the weekend, but his first post-qualifying press conference is something I shall remember for a long time to come. While the others are all well-versed in the ways of the press conference, Hulkenberg had to take a brief crash course in where to sit, and which language to use. The Williams rookie began by making a statement in German, and had to be reminded that the foreign language bit of the TV unilaterals doesn't come till the end. It was a charming moment.

The paddock has been united in praise for the rookie driver. Not only is he the only fresh face we've seen on the front row in what feels like decades, but with his Williams future currently uncertain, there has been nothing but goodwill for Hulkenberg from drivers, press, and rivals teams alike. Mark Webber put it best in the press conference, when he said "[Hulkenberg] made us all look pretty average today."

But enough of the press conference. What does today's qualifying mean for Sunday's race, and for the championship as a whole?

First and foremost, the wet weather did not prove to be the boon that Ferrari and McLaren had hoped. Despite impressive laps from Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso, they were unable to stay on top of the two Red Bulls when it counted. Alonso was fastest in Q1, and there were moments in Q3 when it looked as though Hamilton might cinch pole, but when push came to shove the two Red Bulls will be lining up ahead of their title rivals, as tends to be the case rain or shine.

Mark Webber might seem to be disadvantaged by his second row start, but teammate Sebastian Vettel will start Sunday's race from the dirty side of the track, a point that should work in Webber's favour tomorrow. Of course, anything can happen over the course of a 71 lap race, but there's no denying that a good get-away is important in Formula 1.

Jenson Button is now out of the title race, barring any freak occurrences on track tomorrow. But the British driver is unfailingly optimistic, saying "I've started from farther back than I'll here at Interlagos in the past and have gone on to drive a good race, so let's see what happens. Let's put it this way: my aim is to have some fun tomorrow!"

There is a strong argument for saying that the Brit's title-winning drive from P14 in Brazil 2009 was the best of his career, so Button could turn up trumps on Sunday, scoring more points than expected. But with Alonso, Hamilton, Webber, and Vettel all ahead, it's beyond unlikely that even a miracle performance will reignite Button's championship campaign.

It's hard to make any real predictions about tomorrow's race, given that the current weather forecast for Sunday is partly cloudy, and Saturday's qualifying was affected by rain and changing track conditions as the track began to dry. Add into the mix the fact that the four title contenders are bunched up on the start grid, all lean, mean, and hungry to win, and you've got the potential for serious clashes right off the start. Fortunately, no one has the sort of points advantage that would make a Suzuka 1989 reprise worth the risk.

The one thing we do know is that the nine of the drivers' final runs in Q3 happened on slick tyres, so only Vitaly Petrov will be able to blame his inters for a poor start. Unless, that is, the weather changes once more and Sunday afternoon brings further downpours.

At this point in the piece I'd normally compare and contrast sector times among the frontrunners, to try and get a sense of who's strong at which bit of the track. But the changing track conditions make it too much of a lottery – the carefully harvested data will prove unreliable in a dry race. That being said, Vettel and Webber were consistently faster than Hamilton in every sector, even in the uphill stretch that should play to the strengths of the Mercedes engine.

Alonso was behind Hamilton in every sector, but dramatically so in sector three. Given that the Ferrari driver is starting on the clean side of the grid, the start of the race could be his best chance to get ahead of Hamilton and attempt to make a move on the Red Bulls. At least, that would be the case were it not for the aforementioned rain.

All of the hard work the drivers have done today, laying down rubber on the racing line, will have been washed away in the deluge. The limited number of support events on offer here in Brazil means that the F1 boys can't rely on as much Porsche Cup and Formula 3 rubber as they'd see in Europe. Thanks to the rain, there should be slightly less of a disadvantage than usual for those drivers starting on the dirty side.

And thanks to Hulkenberg's sterling lap, it is entirely possible that the Williams rookie will wind up on the top step of the podium, scuppering Vettel and Hamilton's chances to eat away at Alonso's lead in the standings. Webber has less of a gap to make up, and consequently has less to lose should Hulkenberg lead from pole. As for the fans? We can only hope that Hulkenberg's first pole will become his first win.

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Will the championship be decided here?

I would need to be in possession of a crystal ball in order to answer the title question to this piece, and mine got lost in transit. But if Fernando Alonso wins the Brazilian Grand Prix and Mark Webber finishes in fifth place or lower, the 2010 season will reach its climax before the Abu Dhabi season finale.

Without wanting to discredit Alonso's championship campaign, I hope it doesn't happen. This season has been so tense and varied from start to finish that it deserves to go down to the wire, with all of the serious contenders battling it out on the final lap at Yas Marina.

And it's highly unlikely that the race for the WDC will come to an end here in Interlagos. Alonso is the only driver who could take the crown here in Brazil, and while the Asturian driver is no slouch behind the wheel, he doesn't have the form of his teammate, Felipe Massa, the current master of the



Autodromo Jose Carlos Pace.

Mark Webber won last year's Brazilian Grand Prix with a masterful drive from P2; the Australian took the lead when he passed Rubens Barrichello in the pit stops, and controlled the race from then until the chequered flag. Webber's victory was overshadowed by Jenson Button's P5 finish, which secured both drivers' and constructors' titles for Brawn GP.

But there is a strong argument for saying that Massa would have won the race had he not been sidelined by injury. The Paulista has secured pole in his last three races in Brazil, and would have won them all had he not allowed teammate Kimi Raikkonen to take the win – and the drivers' championship – in the 2007 race. While vagaries of equipment mean that nothing is ever guaranteed in Formula 1, there is no denying that Massa has a certain affinity for Interlagos.

As Massa's current teammate, Alonso made no bones about admitting he'd like to see the Brazilian win this year's race, giving a further boost to the Spaniard's own chances at the title. Speaking at Ferrari's Thursday media call, Alonso said "Felipe is normally very strong here. I think the best thing for us, for me in the championship, for the numbers, is to have Felipe winning the race because he takes 25 points from everybody else. This year, from first to second, there is the biggest difference in points – seven – but from second to third, third to fourth, there are very small differences which may allow me to keep the advantage I have. So the worry for me is the 25 points, if one of the other drivers takes those points. Hopefully Felipe can win both races. It will be the best thing for me."

At the same media call, Massa said that he would be happy to repeat the events of 2007 that led to Raikkonen snatching the title from under the noses of Alonso and Lewis Hamilton, who finished the season one point shy of victory. The Ferrari driver is not in the running for the drivers' crown this year, and will do whatever it takes to help his team's efforts to bring the coveted prize back to Maranello for the first time in three years.

Alonso is the only championship contender to have the full support of his teammate here in Brazil. Red Bull team principal Christian Horner is giving Webber and Sebastian Vettel free reign to fight it out to the final in Abu Dhabi; the two men are 14 points apart in the standings, with Webber in P2 and Vettel in P4. Either driver could take the crown, especially if one man retires from one of the next two races, or fails to finish in the points. As the Korean Grand Prix dramatically demonstrated, anything can happen in Formula 1, and the standings can change in an instant.

More clear cut is the situation at McLaren, where both men are mathematically in with a chance. But the maths are very much in Hamilton's favour – for Button to win the championship the other four contenders would need to finish both races out of the points (or near as dammit). But Button has avowed his intention to fight to the finish; the British driver is keen to defend his WDC and prove to the doubters that he's no one-hit wonder.

There have been mixed messages from the McLaren garage in recent days. Team principal Martin Whitmarsh has been careful not to make any statements to the press that could be read as team orders, but he admits that it will be an uphill battle for Button to retain his crown, given that the British driver is 42 points off the lead with only 50 points remaining.

"Lewis and Jenson are both going to try and win the race," Whitmarsh said. "In the race itself, then we'll see what that situation is. If we are in the fortunate position of being in a strong one-two position, then that's a nice challenge to have. But I think the right frame of mind for the team and both drivers is we should be going to any event trying to win it, and trying to have a 1-2. We can try and consider a variety of scenarios. We've been in championship hunts many times before, so have both the drivers. The best thing to do is to try and go there and win. We are not in the fortunate position of defending a lead, we're going there to attack and try and win.

"There's a good relationship between the two drivers," the McLaren chief continued. "I'm sure they're going to cooperate with each other. Jenson is a remarkably composed, mature, thinking driver, and he should go there with the attitude of trying and seeking to win the race. During the course of the weekend, I'm sure he'll do everything he can to fulfil the ambitions of the team. I think we all know there are no team orders, so I think the right thing for a racing driver is to go there and try to win. The championship for Jenson in particular is tough, but if he was telling me he'd given up, then I would be deeply disappointed."

Should Button drop out of the running entirely after Brazil, he will almost certainly be expected to do what he can to support Hamilton in the season finale. But as Alonso has pointed out here at Interlagos, that support could take the form of snatching the win – and the coveted 25 points – from the other contenders. Only in Formula 1 can you lose when you win.

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## F1 Brazil Blog – The Brazilian Grand Prix as it happened

Ah, Interlagos. Massive booing from the crowds for Fernando Alonso, pre-race electronic problems for Christian Klien, and track temperature a scorching 51 degrees. And that's without mentioning Jenson Button's brush with death, Nico Hulkenberg's shock pole, and the championship fight to come. What more could the Brazilian Grand Prix possibly have in store?

The next 71 laps won't be a snorefest, that much is certain.

No chance of rain, fresh rubber for Vitaly Petrov, who qualified on inters, and Michael Schumacher ahead of Nico Rosberg on the grid for the first time in ages. Will we see thrills, spills, and a Safety Car?

The grid is emptying of the great, the good, and the media, and the drivers are readying themselves for the installation lap. Only minutes to go before the racing begins in earnest. And what a noise from the engines as the cars peel away! There's nothing like it in this world – no other track provides such an aural treat from the press room.

There's currently a sweepstake on Nico Hulkenberg's chances of retaining the lead, and it doesn't look good for the young German. With two Red Bulls just behind, and Alonso and Lewis Hamilton within striking distance, the Williams rookie is in for a fight from the very start.

And they're off!

Hulkenberg loses the lead to Vettel by the first corner, and is quickly pushed down to third by Webber. Alonso is chasing down Hamilton, trying to overtake, but can't make a move stick. Somehow, Vitaly Petrov – who didn't get a bad start – is all the way down in P22. Whatever else happens, you can't fault the first few corners for serious action.

Lap 2, and Hamilton runs wide, letting Alonso through. This is going to be bad news for the McLaren driver's championship campaign unless he can take the position back. Alonso comes up against the back of Hulkenberg, who is fighting to hold on to that third place. Good defensive driving from the young German, as Alonso is no slouch when it comes to overtaking.

Schumacher takes Button on lap 3, and could be working his way into the points at a track he's won at more times than most of us have had hot dinners. Why yes, I do eat a lot of cold dinners, thanks for asking.

Not much action at the front, which is where the cameras are pointing, but I can see from the live timings that there's a lot of movement further down the field. Where is it, and why can't we see it? If there's racing going on, show it!

Hulkenberg's still doing an able job of keeping back Alonso – we're on lap 5, and he's showing no sign of letting him past. Good driving from the rookie. Alonso is getting very frustrated – will he end his race with a risky and foolish manoeuvre? There's radio coming in from Ferrari: can't hear it but I imagine they're telling him to hold his prancing horses. Passing the Hulk is a matter of when, not if, and it's not worth throwing away the race over.

If the race finishes in this order – assuming Alonso passes Hulkenberg, that is – Red Bull are going to have some serious strategic and moral issues to play with on the plane to Abu Dhabi. Vettel may be in the lead, but with Alonso on such good form they will need to let Webber pass the young German if they want to have a decent chance at the WDC. If Vettel wins and Webber finishes in P2, Webber will be eight points behind Alonso in the drivers' standings. But if Webber wins, that margin is reduced to a single point.

What to do, what to do? After all, the team have been vocal about letting their drivers race to the final lap, but will they really throw away the chance of winning both titles? Team orders aren't popular, but everyone accepts that it's different when the battle has come down to the wire. Vettel may be desperate to claim the 'youngest WDC' crown from Hamilton, but Webber's in with a better chance of the win. I am very glad not to be Christian Horner right now.

Anyway, back to the racing. Other than Alonso passing Hulkenberg on lap 7 and peeling off into the distance, not much has happened. Hamilton's been trying his chances, but the Hulk is a real fighter, and isn't giving an inch to the McLaren driver. And good on him for holding firm!

The downside to all this battling is that there's now a little bit of a train going on behind Hulkenberg. Conductor Trulli is probably getting a bit jealous, as it's a mighty fine stream of cars that are held up behind the Williams – Hamilton, Kubica, the Mercedes pair...

Lap 12, and Webber's beginning to eat away at Vettel's lead. Will the Australian get past the young German under his own steam, or will the two men clash (and crash), gifting the top spot on the podium to Ferrari? Never mind the moral quandary, that would be the worst-case scenario for Red Bull, gifting the WDC to Alonso before the season even ends.

Pit stop frenzy has begun, led by Button. In at P12, back out in P18. Either McLaren are pulling off some genius strategic manoeuvre, or this is the worst case of silly buggers I've ever seen. Next in is Massa, who's back out in P17. Button gets past the Ferrari driver, and McLaren's plan is looking a bit more solid.

Hamilton should be next in the pits: he's on the radio complaining of tyre trouble and just can't get past Hulkenberg. But that honour goes to Rubens Barrichello on lap 14, who has a slow pit stop thanks to a troublesome rear wheel. The Brazilian is back out in P17. Massa's in again, this time for a new wing, and comes out in P23. Hardly a dream race in front of the home crowd.

Lap 15, and Hulkenberg pits, promoting Hamilton to P4. The Williams rookie is back out in P13, so out of the points despite starting from pole. Ah well – there's a lot of time remaining in which to claw back a position or two. Robert Kubica also comes in for fresh rubber, followed by Nick Heidfeld.

Without Hulkenberg in the way, Hamilton is 10 seconds down on Alonso. This is going to be an uphill battle for the Brit, and not just because the Interlagos circuit undulates.

Button's now making the most of his new rubber, and could well be battling his teammate at the end of the race. But Button's hopes of the WDC have all but disappeared, while Hamilton is still in with a chance. Is it really worth having the two men fight it out?

Lap 17, and Alonso's currently 11.4s down on Webber, with Hamilton 10.9s down on his former teammate. This race is beginning to look remarkably like a procession. And judging by the distances on the live timing screen, the frontrunners are only a few laps away from hitting backmarker traffic. Oh joy. The games will truly begin. Not.

Maybe I spoke too soon. Not that I've ever done that before, oh no. Yes, we've lapped three backmarker already and it's only lap 20, but Massa's just gone purple in P19, which is no mean feat. This race could save itself yet.

Alonso keeps closing the margin to Webber and then dropping back again; this traffic is not helping matters any. Shame one of F1's best circuits is also so short – it's hard to avoid traffic in this race, and when you have four men fighting for the championship, it's a fight you want to see, not good laps ruined by heavy traffic.

Lap 21 and Hamilton pits for fresh rubber. He's back out in P6, with Button in P7. The only real action to speak of at the moment is the battle for P8, between Schumacher and Adrian Sutil, who's done an excellent job fighting his way through the pack.

Hamilton's closing in on Kobayashi; the gap is down to three seconds and the Brit looks certain to take P5 in the next few laps. Webber and Vettel

appear to be going easy, the gap between the two has been hovering around 2.8s for what feels like months.

Lap 24 and Alonso pits. No change to the Spaniard's track position; he holds P3 thanks to the massive gap the frontrunners have built up. Rosberg was 19s behind in P4 when Alonso came in, and that was a comfortable margin to be getting on with.

Vettel pits on the next lap, handing the lead to Webber. But not for long. Webber's in on lap 26, and Vettel retakes the lead. While the Red Bull pair are playing swapsies, Hamilton overtakes Kobayashi at the end of the pit straight.

Lap 27 and Rosberg is the next of the frontrunners to pit, pushing Hamilton back up to P4. The Mercedes driver exits the pits in P7. It's now Vettel, Webber, Alonso, Hamilton, Kobayashi, Button, and Rosberg.

Nothing is happening. Not that I can see, anyway. The TV feed seems to be intent on only showing where the action isn't, not where it is. Button takes Kobayashi on lap 30, and Alonso and Hamilton aren't really making an impression on each other or on the Red Bulls up ahead. On lap 33 Massa takes Liuzzi and moves up to P16.

Ooh, some action! Barrichello and Alguersuari tangle on lap 35, and Barrichello is off with what looks like a puncture. Alguersuari's up to P13, and Barrichello is into the pits for a new tyre. Definitely a puncture, then.

Lap 39 and traffic is playing silly buggers with the race again. This time it's Bruno Senna, who's managed to slow both Red Bull drivers as he's being passed. Alonso's too far behind to take advantage, and is likely to get into his own traffic troubles any second. Rosberg takes Kobayashi, still on lap 39.

Lap 41, and the backmarkers are doing their best to decide the race in Vettel's favour. I don't think they're deliberately blocking Webber, but they are making it pretty difficult for him to get past. Don't they realise there's a championship at stake here, and they're not in it?

Looks like Lucas di Grassi might have retired. Lap 44 and he's entered the pits, but the mechanics are wheeling him into the garage and having a poke about.

Pretty quiet few laps, but now it looks as though Buemi and Massa are getting ready to lock horns. Nope, false alarm. But they are getting close enough for a battle – when it comes...

Lap 48 and di Grassi's back out! Good job from the Virgin boys, whatever it is they did in there. No reports yet of the cause of the problem, so it could have been anything. Hopefully we'll find out before the race comes to an end. And at the end of the lap, Massa does a mighty fine job holding up Webber as he's being lapped. Is this intentional? The 0.3s Webber's lost here could help Alonso, but the stewards don't seem to see anything wrong so I'm probably just being paranoid.

But Massa has now been lapped at home, at the circuit he's made his own in recent years. This is more than a little bit embarrassing for the poor dear.

Liuzzi has crashed! Lap 51, and the race has been yellow-flagged. Looks like the Safety Car will be deployed pretty soon – the Force India driver ran wide and came off at Turn 2, where there's no real run-off area to speak of. And the Safety Car will come out on the lap 51/52 cusp. Things could be about to get very interesting.

Unsurprisingly, the pits are filling up behind the Safety Car; everyone wants to take advantage of the chance to grab some fresh rubber for free. Sutil's in first, followed by Massa, Hamilton, Barrichello, and Rosberg. Rosberg suffers the indignity of a slow stop – neither of his right side tyres seem willing to cooperate.

It's now Vettel, Webber, Alonso, Button, Hamilton, with the Safety Car in the lead. But Button pits on lap 53, and he and Hamilton trade places. The cars behind have all been lapped up to Hulkenberg, who sits in P8.

Lap 55 and Rosberg pits again! Did they put the wrong tyre on, or what? The Mercedes driver is down to P7, and the Safety Car will be coming in at the end of this lap. There are now so many cars out of position on track that it looks like we'll be denied a proper racing restart. Shame.

Wish I could tell you what's going on now, but the TV feed in the press room is pretty Massa-obsessed, even though the action should all be at the front, with the championship contenders. It's not as if they're fighting for points or anything, oh no.

All I know is that whenever it looks as though we might be in for some sort of a fight at the front, the drivers concerned get stuck in traffic by backmarkers who fail to pull aside. Massa and Buemi knock together, but they're fighting for P412, or something like that. Massa's off, and might have wing damage.

Buemi's now leading a massive train, with Sutil just behind. Sutil isn't going to stand for this nonsense, oh no. The Force India driver takes the Toro Rosso pilot on lap 62, and that's the most exciting thing we've seen since the Safety Car. Still no coverage of the battle at the front; we're only seeing the Red Bull drivers when they pass Massa.

The only real bit of news to come out of the race at the moment is the fact that Red Bull have basically sewn up the team's first world championship title – the constructors'. Good on the boys from Milton Keynes! And the drivers, natch.

The drivers' title is still up for grabs, and it looks like Alonso will be heading to Abu Dhabi with an eight point lead over Webber. Red Bull could still get their drivers to swap position, reducing Alonso's lead to a single point, but Horner has been vocal about the fact that he wants his drivers to race to the absolute finish, even if doing so costs the team their first chance at the double.

Otherwise it's a competition to see who can set the most purple laps, while Nick Heidfeld's been issued a drive-through penalty for failing to obey the blue flags. Pretty much everyone behind P8 on the field has ignored blue flags this afternoon, so it hardly seems fair to single out Heidfeld.

Lap 68 and Hamilton goes purple. Will it be the final fastest lap of the race?

We've finally got footage of the frontrunners, and barring any last-minute engine failures, it looks like the order will be much the same as it has been since about lap 9.

And it is! Vettel wins the Brazilian Grand Prix, followed closely by Mark Webber. Red Bull are the 2010 World Constructors' Champions.

Taking the chequered flag, in order, are: Vettel, Webber, Alonso, Hamilton, Button, Rosberg, Schumacher, Hulkenberg, Kubica, Kobayashi, Alguersuari, Sutil, Buemi, Barrichello, Massa, Petrov, Heidfeld, Kovalainen, Trulli, Glock, Senna, Klien, di Grassi, Liuzzi. Although strictly speaking Liuzzi didn't take the chequered flag. Ah well – semantics.

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Red Bull Racing win World Constructors' Championship

Congratulations to Red Bull for their first world championship. Following a traffic-heavy race at Interlagos, the team from Austria and Milton Keynes took home their first constructors' crown, courtesy of strong drives from Sebastian Vettel and Mark Webber and Adrian Newey's RB6.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the RB6 has been the car of the year, although the team have suffered a number of reliability and engine problems, usually affecting Sebastian Vettel's car.

In the capable hands of Vettel and Webber, the RB6 has scored fourteen of eighteen pole positions. Vettel has been first on the grid on nine occasions – Bahrain, Australia, China, Valencia, Britain, Germany, Hungary, Japan, and Korea – while Webber has had five poles, in Malaysia, Barcelona, Monaco, Turkey, and Belgium.

Perhaps more impressively, there has been at least one Red Bull on the front row of every race except the Italian Grand Prix at Monza, while the team has locked out the front row at eight races.

While the drivers are to be commended for their efforts, the hard work done by the team – both trackside and back home in the factory – should not be discounted. The car's early fragility was overcome by the beginning of the European leg of the season, putting Red Bull in a strong position to claim the WCC as their own.

There is still one more race to be run – next week's season finale in Abu Dhabi – but Red Bull have built up an unassailable lead in the constructors' standings. There will be a lot of celebrating in Sao Paulo this evening.

### F1 World Constructors' Standings

1. Red Bull-Renault 469pts
2. McLaren-Mercedes 421pts
3. Ferrari 389pts
4. Mercedes 202pts
5. Renault 145pts
6. Williams-Cosworth 69pts
7. Force India-Mercedes 68pts
8. Sauber-Ferrari 44pts
9. Toro Rosso-Ferrari 1pts
10. Lotus Racing-Cosworth 0pts
11. HRT-Cosworth 0pts
12. Virgin Racing-Cosworth 0pts

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## F1 Brazil Blog – Looking back on the Brazilian Grand Prix

Traffic, traffic, traffic. The short lap at Interlagos meant that the Brazilian Grand Prix – a race that could have decided the drivers' championship, and did decide the constructors' – was affected more by the lapped than by the men in front.

Putting aside the actual racing for a moment, the TV feed of the Brazilian Grand Prix was terrible. Despite the championship battle going on at the front of the pack, the cameras spent much of the race – especially in the post-Safety Car period – tracking the Ferrari of Felipe Massa, who was in P15 at the time.

Massa may be the hometown hero, but this was not his race. That honour belonged to the Red Bull pair and Massa's Ferrari teammate, Fernando Alonso, the three men now fighting seriously for the drivers' title. McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton is still in with a chance, but the Brit is in the same position teammate Jenson Button was after the Korean race – victory is mathematically possible, but would rely on a host of failures by the competition.

Most of the action on track this afternoon came courtesy of cars being lapped. By the end of the 71st lap, all of the cars up to Michael Schumacher in P7 had been lapped, some multiple times. Massa suffered the indignity of being lapped in front of his home crowd, but he was one of 17 men to suffer the same fate, something that would temper the anguish were it not for the Paulista's former domination of this circuit.

The blue flags were out in force this afternoon, but the penalties were scarce, despite the amount of time it took a number of cars to move over for the men ahead. Every time it looked as though Mark Webber were closing on race leader Sebastian Vettel, the two would get caught in a traffic jam of

backmarkers, and the tension would be lost.

This was worst after the Safety Car. Where the restart should have given fans the opportunity to watch all four of the title contenders battle for the lead, Vettel had a comfortable margin, thanks to two lapped cars between him and Webber. Alonso and Hamilton were further back, also caught in traffic.

While some might think it poetic that Sao Paulo's legendary traffic jams extended to the circuit, the simple fact remains that it deprived fans of action in what should have been a thrilling race. There is no stronger argument for the FIA to consider amending Article 40.8 of the Sporting Regulations, which reads: "When ordered to do so by the clerk of the course the observer in the car will use a green light to signal to any cars between it and the race leader that they should pass. These cars will continue at reduced speed and without overtaking until they reach the line of cars behind the safety car."

If cars returned to race order under the Safety Car, so that the first placed car was followed by the second, who was followed by the third, and so on, then real racing would resume when the Safety Car returned to the pits. As things stand, backmarkers who are out of position deprive fans of action and teams of competition.

There is no thrill to be gained from watching a Red Bull or Ferrari overtake a Virgin or HRT. There is no doubt that those racing for the championship are faster, and there is no element of competition in the manoeuvre. What fans want to see is the Red Bulls and Ferraris battling each other for position, not losing hard-won tenths thanks to slow-moving traffic.

It's a real shame that a race that was built up to be such a thriller - a possible double championship decider - turned into a typical Friday afternoon on the M25.

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