



Canada was only my second race as an accredited journalist, and I'd not worked out a rhythm to my coverage yet. I also worked out a **novel way to humiliate yourself on an airplane**. It's like having my growing pains laid bare on the internet for you to laugh at...

F1 Canada Blog: Thursday press conference

You can get transcripts of the press conference all over the internet. Who asked what, the answers, all of it. But what you get from girlracer is something different.

Renault driver Robert Kubica was the first to arrive for the morning conference at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. While waiting for it to start he sat to one side, drinking something lurid and blue. Gatorade? Powerade? I'd be very surprised if it didn't advertise something to do with electrolytes on the side.

Nico Rosberg was next in, followed in short order by Lucas di Grassi and Lewis Hamilton. The three went straight to the seating area, where Lewis and Nico had an inaudible but gossipy-looking chat. Felipe Massa was the last driver to arrive; he greeted Kubica before joining in on the Rosberg-Hamilton natter.

Lucas di Grassi is definitely the new kid in school, and I imagine he feels a lot like I do when entering a press room – he knows the other drivers, and can chat to them, but lacks the history and in-jokes that bond them. By the end of the season that should change – he and the other rookies will have their own stories and in-jokes to trade before the press calls.

As the press conference began, Lewis Hamilton was reminded to turn his phone off by the McLaren media rep. 'It's off!' he said, pulling it from his pocket. 'Oh, it isn't. Oops.'

The problem with a press conference is that the drivers largely know the types of questions to expect, and so rough answers will have been worked out with the team's media people. This is especially true in the aftermath of a story like the Turkish Grand Prix. So the drivers were all asked about racing their teammate, and the answers were pretty identical: "try and overtake if you can, but do it sensibly"; "for sure you're going to try to overtake, but the most important thing is to respect the team"; "whoever you are overtaking you need to balance the risk".

The only real answer was written all over their faces when the question was asked – each man's expression was a halfway house between a wry smile and a grimace.

Biggest surprise was Felipe Massa, who by my count only said 'for sure' three times. Nico Rosberg, on the other hand, peppered his responses with it. Is forsuritis a contagious disease? Will the entire paddock be afflicted by the time the circus arrives in Abu Dhabi? I don't know for sure.

It struck me, when Massa was talking about his new Ferrari contract, that the words resign and re-sign are merely a hyphen apart, but mean entirely different things. The Brazilian was asked how he felt now that his contract was settled, and my notes read "fantastic to resign for Ferrari; shows everyone on the team trusts you". A lack of hyphenation turns it into a completely different story.

For some reason the air conditioning was on in the press conference room, and the five drivers were hunched up in their coats looking freezing. When not on camera, they were jiggling about in their seats trying to stay warm, pulling up the necks of their jackets and pulling their hands into their sleeves. But as soon as the camera turned to them again they were consummate professionals with no sign of physical discomfort.

The quotes from the press conference were pretty much as you'd expect – everyone loves Montreal, both city and race, and the drivers are glad to be back. The teams are all making progress, and hope to improve with every race, thanks to their ongoing development programmes. No one would attempt a risky overtake on a teammate, but as racers they all want to win.

And now you don't need to worry about the transcripts – the above was the whole press conference in a paragraph. I told you girlracer was a little bit different...

F1 Canada Blog – F1 live from Montreal

And the first car has left the pitlane for F1 in Montreal. The sound is beautiful – the hairs on the back of my neck are standing up, and there are shivers down my spine. There is nothing on earth quiet like the thrill of listening to 24 cars firing up their engines and readying themselves for the race ahead.

Of course, not all 24 cars are on track just yet – about half the drivers are still in the pits, waiting. As ever, F1 is installation lap central. Drivers are heading out, testing a setting here and a component there before heading back to the pits and tweaking something else for the next run.

Other than Timo Glock and Rubens Barrichello, everyone's left the pits at least once. No times are on the board yet, and I don't expect to see any for a good half hour, if previous races are any indication.

Nico Rosberg has just started the first timed lap of the morning, assuming he doesn't nip back into the pits before it's over. The circuit looks beautiful on the televised footage – trees, walls, and dappled sunlight, with the lake shimmering in the background. There is something magical about the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, and it's not all down to history. If I were a more superstitious person, I'd think the island had been built according to ley lines.

And Rosberg nips back in to the pits without setting a time. There is so little happening on track that the cameras are focussing on the arriving crowds. I think there are already more race fans here than Turkey saw all weekend. That's only a guess, mind – I've not been standing at the gates with one of those clicky things bouncers have.

Track temperature is currently 24 degrees, relatively cool when viewed in conjunction with Turkey, Spain, Malaysia et al. Air temperature is 19 degrees, roughly double yesterday's froideur. The important thing is that the track has dried out overnight, so the drivers can leave the life jackets and water wings in the garage.

Kamui Kobayashi has just set the first time of the morning, a 1.28.723s. Jaime Alguersuari is currently on track, and has just snatched the top spot with a 1.25.265s. I seem to have picked the wrong seat in the media centre, as I can only just make out the times on the leaderboard. Note to self – for future races, make sure you can see the telly before choosing where to sit.

Both Kobayashi and Alguersuari are still on track, chipping away at their times, while Nico Hulkenberg, Sebastian Buemi, and Bruno Senna are on timed laps. Everyone else is still in the pits, although Chandhok is emerging as I type. Senna is currently in P3, although I don't think he will stay there for long.

I'm going to take a brief break from my laptop, and see if I can spot any excitements (or hear any gossip) in the paddock itself. By the time I get back, the leaderboard should look a bit healthier.

I was right – back at my seat after a ten minute stroll, and we now have ten times on the board. Lap record holder Rubens Barrichello is currently top with a 1.20.276s, but none of the drivers from the big five – I include Renault in that statement – have posted times.

One thing that struck me in my brief wander was the feeling of an F1 car passing the pitlane. In Bahrain, you could hear them, but here you can also feel them. There's a slight vibration in the tarmac whenever a car passes, much like you can feel the thumping bass from a speaker in a nightclub.

Jenson Button has just set his first timed lap of the morning, popping up in P6 with a 1.22.449s. Mark Webber is currently on a timed lap, and slots in above Button with a 1.22.107s. F1 is kicking off in earnest.

The leaderboard is now changing too quickly for me to keep up. Lewis Hamilton went top with his first timed lap, and has since been dethroned by his teammate. Michael Schumacher is currently in P3, and the three top runners are all in the L19s. The two Red Bulls are currently in P10 (Webber) and P12 (Sebastian Vettel), but are sliding down the ranks as other drivers set times.

Schumacher has just gone fastest with a 1.19.173s, and in the time it took me to type that Hamilton has broken into the L18s, the first man of the morning to do so. The McLaren driver currently has a margin of 0.057s over his teammate in P2, the second driver to break the L18s barrier.

Everyone expected the McLarens to perform well at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, and they have not disappointed thus far. Of course, the word in the paddock is that the Woking outfit run the lightest fuel loads on Fridays, explaining why their strong performances in practice don't seem to translate into qualifying domination.

Right now the top six is made up of both drivers from each of McLaren, Mercedes, and Ferrari. Have the Scuderia finally cracked their F-duct, or are they running on fumes in an attempt to boost morale with some headline-grabbing times? Vettel and Robert Kubica complete the top eight for now, and Webber and Tonio Liuzzi round out the top ten.

Jenson Button has reclaimed the top spot for himself, with a 1.18.127s, but he is back in the pits while his teammate is out on track, searching for those hidden tenths. The gap between the two men stands at two-tenths, a not insurmountable margin.

Unsurprisingly, the back of the pack is made up of a combination of new teams and rookie drivers, those who have yet to race at Montreal. As the rookies gain confidence in the circuit, they should creep up the leaderboard, but I expect to see more progress from them this afternoon.

So far, only Button, Hamilton, and Fernando Alonso have broken into the L18s, although Nico Rosberg only needs to find one more tenth to join the club. The lap record here in Montreal is 1.13.662s, set by Rubens Barrichello in 2004. The track configuration this year is the same as in 2004, so we could see a new record this year. Could, not will.

Robert Kubica has just popped up in P4 with a 1.18.984s, making him the fourth member of the L18s club. The Pole's only F1 victory came at this circuit

in 2008, a year after his dramatic hairpin accident. He should do well here – in addition to his experience, the track conditions suit the R30.

Lucas di Grassi has just pulled off track at Turn 6, and the session is running under yellow flags. There's no word yet on what the problem might be, but given that he was in control of the car and travelling at slow speeds, my guess is some form of technical problem. Again. The mechanics at the new teams have earned every penny of their wages so far this season, and we're less than half-way through.

Michael Schumacher has popped up in P2, pushing Hamilton down into P3. The German set a time of 1:18.285s, placing him one-tenth behind Button and one-tenth ahead of Hamilton. Jenson Button is currently out on track, assuring his lead, while Hamilton is in the pits.

Pedro de la Rosa had a brief spin at the hairpin, yellow-flagging the session, and there were a few close calls as the following cars did their best to avoid him.

Nico Hulkenberg is currently in P8, just ahead of Williams teammate Barrichello in P9 and Vettel in P10. Tonio Liuzzi, who is reverting to an old chassis this weekend, is currently in P7 with a 1:19.739s, while Adrian Sutil is in P11, just ahead of Massa and Webber.

Lewis Hamilton is back out on track, hoping to be the first man to set a 1:17s. He is racing against his teammate, also on track, and two-tenths closer to the 1:17s barrier. Button looks to be running a heavier fuel load this time around, and he hasn't made a dent in his time, although the Frome Flyer is still sitting pretty in P1.

Hamilton has a mini off on the first corner, kissing the run-off area. It's not looking good for him at the moment – he's not set a personal best in any sector, so it is likely that both McLaren drivers are on longer runs with heavier fuel loads. It's obvious that the team have pace at this circuit, what matters is their tyres and their performance tomorrow afternoon.

What's interesting me this morning is the engine split. The top three spots are occupied by Mercedes engines, which is no real surprise – it's hardly an asthmatic hair dryer. But Kubica's P4 is worthy of comment, especially when viewed in light of the Red Bulls' current positions – P10 and P13. The Renault engine has its upsides, but is not the most powerful on the grid. Can Red Bull find the same pace available to Kubica, or have they arrived in Canada with too much downforce?

Sebastian Vettel has just popped up in P7 with a 1:19.066s and is in the middle of a Mercedes-powered sandwich, with Rosberg just ahead and Liuzzi just behind. And as the session is nearing its end, it is chaos out on track. Not bad chaos, just lap times changing faster than I can blink, never mind type.

There are only minutes remaining of the session, and nearly everyone's out on track. Schumacher had a brief off-track wobble at Turn 8, but should end F1 in P2, as grip levels are down and graining up. Track temperature has fallen to 21 degrees, and tyres are looking marbled as the cars return to the pits.

Analysis to follow.

F1 times (unofficial):

1. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:18.127s
2. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:18.285s +0.158s
3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:18.352s +0.225s
4. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:18.356s +0.229s
5. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:18.549s +0.422s
6. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1:18.662s +0.535s
7. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:18.726s +0.599s
8. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1:19.097s +0.970s
9. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1:19.282s +1.155s
10. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:19.313s +1.186s
11. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1:19.373s +1.246s
12. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:19.511s +1.384s
13. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1:19.549s +1.422s
14. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:19.609s +1.482s
15. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:20.186s + 2.059s
16. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1:20.320s +2.193s
17. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1:20.584s + 2.457s
18. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:20.823s +2.696s
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1:21.869s +3.742s
20. Karun Chandhok (HRT) 1:21.977s 3.850s
21. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1:22.543s +4.416s
22. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1:22.701s +4.574s
23. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:22.713s +4.586s
24. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) no time set

F1 Canada Blog – F1 analysis

Trying to analyse a practice session is something of a fool's errand. After all, what with new components, variable fuel weights, and a host of other factors, the best analysis is little more than an educated guess.

But as a fool, I am going to give it a go.

The most obvious conclusion to draw from this morning's practice session is that the Mercedes engine is performing as well as was expected. The Circuit Gilles Villeneuve is essentially a network of straights, and the pure power of the Mercedes engine was only every going to be an advantage in Montreal.

Half of the morning's top ten was Mercedes-powered, an impressive statistic when you consider that only six cars on the grid have the German engine. The only Merc-powered driver not to finish in the top ten was Adrian Sutil in P11, and he was only 0.06s slower than Rubens Barrichello in P10.

While it is tempting to look at this morning's results as proof of Michael Schumacher's return to race-winning form, the truth isn't that simple. Schumacher performed well, of that there is no doubt. And he is improving with every race, gaining confidence in the car and in his own racecraft. But his P2 time was not the decisive return to form fans have been hoping for.

The two McLaren drivers set their fastest times relatively early in the morning session. Relatively, because few times were set in the first 45 minutes. But both men set their L18s times in their first run, before the track had rubbered in. Schumacher's time, on the other hand, was set later on in the morning, when times were dropping as track conditions improved.

The other factor to consider is Schumacher's historic dominance of this circuit – he has won seven Canadian Grands Prix, all at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. It is a track he knows well, and one that suits his driving style. The litmus test for Schumacher will be tomorrow's qualifying session. Based on F1, he should do well. The question is, how well?

Williams had a strong showing this morning, with both drivers appearing in the top ten. But the real surprise there was that lap record holder Rubens Barrichello was marginally slower than rookie teammate Nico Hulkenberg. Hulkenberg was widely touted as the next Lewis Hamilton when he arrived in Formula 1, but has had an ignominious start to the season. The young German currently stands 17th in the WDC, with one championship point. He has retired – spectacularly – from two races this season, and been uncompetitive in the races he's finished. Is it the fault of man, machine, or both?

Sebastian Vettel outperformed teammate Mark Webber this morning, although neither Red Bull driver was particularly awe-inspiring. Red Bull tend to spend Fridays focussing on data-harvesting and race preparations, not headline-grabbing times, so there is not much to be read into either driver's performance. Vettel obviously wants to prove he's faster than his teammate, but that can be said of 23 other drivers currently readying themselves for FP2.

Ferrari have yet to show their hand this weekend, either positively or negatively. Both Fernando Alonso and Felipe Massa posted fairly middling times, with the Spaniard finishing in P7 and his teammate in P12. This could be a continuation of their current doldrums, or a sign that the team had other aims in mind when preparing for this morning's session. To really get an idea of the Scuderia's pace, times from all three sessions will need to be viewed in conjunction with the number of laps run in each phase.

FP2 is about to begin, so in an hour's time we will know more than the simple fact that Mercedes make good engines. It's not a lot to go on, really.

F1 Canada Blog – FP2 live from Montreal

The pitlane has opened, and FP2 has begun. It's go, go, go with the roar of the engines, and cars are pouring out of the garages and onto the circuit.

Where F1 always takes an age to kick off, the afternoon session sees laps posted almost immediately. The headline names focus on installation laps and minor tweaks, much like the morning, but the midfield is out in force, making the most of the available running time.

Track temperature has climbed to 26 degrees since F1 ended a few short hours ago, and air temperature is currently 21 degrees, marginally warmer than this morning. There's no sign of rain as I type, but the sky is overcast and grey, meaning brief drizzle is always a possibility.

I spoke too soon about the headline names – Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button are out on track, setting fastest times. Hamilton was top of the leaderboard with a 1:18.421s, despite getting stuck in a bit of traffic, but Button dislodges him almost immediately with a 1:17.961s, making the Brit the first man to break the 1:17s barrier this weekend.

As ever in a practice session, times are changing faster than I can type. Hamilton was briefly on top, before Nico Rosberg moved up from P3, usurping him with a 1:17.227s. The times aren't falling here in Montreal, they're collapsing.

Felipe Massa and Robert Kubica were briefly in P4 and P3 respectively, but too much has changed in the past three minutes. Michael Schumacher has posted a 1:17.813s, good enough for P3, while Tonio Liuzzi's 1:17.903s has pushed Button down to P6. That is a spectacular time from the Force India driver, and further proof of the power of the Mercedes engine at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

Sebastian Vettel's first timed lap put the young German in P12: teammate Mark Webber, the first man to leave the pits in this session, has yet to set a time. Except he did while I was typing, a 1:19.164s that was good enough for P14. The afternoon is much more competitive than the morning, and margins are tighter than a hipster's skinny jeans.

The bulk of the drivers have returned to the pits, leaving Vettel, Webber, Fernando Alonso, Nico Hulkenberg, and Karun Chandhok out on track. Vettel has been steadily climbing up the leaderboard lap by lap, and has just posted a 1:17.329s, putting the young German in P2. Webber has been following in his teammate's footsteps, slowly working his way up the board, and currently stands in P4 with a 1:17.600s.

Nico Rosberg solidifies his lead with a 1:17.151s, six-tenths faster than his teammate. The Rosberg-Schumacher battle is an interesting one, as Rosberg's

early season advantage has dissipated of late, leaving the two drivers to swap top dog position at every race. Schumacher still has some rust to scrape off, and Rosberg needs to find more consistent pace, but the Mercedes pairing currently appears to be working well, motivating each driver in turn.

Looking further down the leaderboard, there aren't many surprises. Jarno Trulli is having gearbox issues, and has yet to appear on track this session, but the other drivers from the new teams take up P19 to P23, with Heikki Kovalainen fastest for Lotus with a 1:20.687s. Half a second behind him is HRT's Karun Chandhok, with Timo Glock half a second slower for Virgin.

It is in the middle of the pack where things get interesting. Fernando Alonso, who has been having a tumultuous season of late, is currently in P10, just ahead of Robert Kubica. Kubica's only F1 victory to date came in Montreal, and given the Pole's strong performances thus far, he is expected to do well on Sunday.

Tumultuous was the right word to use to describe Alonso's season thus far – in the time it took to type the above paragraph, the Spaniard set a 1:17.518s, catapulting the Ferrari driver into P3, four places above his teammate. There is no doubt that Alonso has pace, but he has been lacking the car so far this season – his only win thus far was inherited, a comedown for the driver who was hotly tipped as a shoe-in for a third championship following winter testing.

Ferrari have long been aware of their development problems, and have focussed their efforts on designing and refining an F-duct. Whether or not they've cracked it remains to be seen – one good weekend does not a season make, and this weekend has barely started.

Toro Rosso are not having a brilliant afternoon thus far – Jaime Alguersuari and Sebastian Buemi are in P17 and P18 respectively, ahead of the new teams by a mere three-tenths. Is that testimony to Lotus' engineering efforts, or Heikki Kovalainen's talents? The Finn is the only driver from a new team to be lapping in the 1:19s, the others are posting times in the 1:21s.

Now that the session has reached the half-way point, drivers and teams are beginning to play around with their tyres. Where harder tyres (aka the medium compound) were the order of the day when the session began, times are now being set on the supersofts. Surprisingly, there doesn't seem to be any improvement in times. Rosberg, Hamilton, and Button have all posted laps on supersofts, but they are all holding position on the leaderboards.

Sebastian Vettel has just gone P1 with a 1:17.141s, shaking up the top of the timesheets for the first time in what feels like an age. The Red Bull driver was on the option tyre, and the softer compound has given him pace his opponents were unable to find. Track temperature has climbed to 27 degrees since the session began, and the ever-changing track conditions make the tyre game a tough one to play.

With half an hour remaining of FP2, the leaderboard is beginning to change rapidly. The softer rubber now seems to be working for more of the field, with Webber in P3 and Massa in P4, both with times set on the supersofts. Fernando Alonso is also finding pace in the option tyre, popping up in P2 with a 1:17.056s.

Fastest man so far is still Sebastian Vettel, the first man to post a time in the 1:16s: a blistering 1:16.877s.

Adrian Sutil has now eclipsed teammate Liuzzi, posting a 1:17.415s that was fast enough to push Hamilton down into P7. Neither McLaren driver has been dominant this afternoon, in stark contrast to this morning's session. Both men were top of the timesheets very early on in FP2, but a lack of grip on soft rubber plus time spent in the pits has seen them pushed down the rankings lap by lap.

Jarno Trulli is getting ready to leave the pits for the first time this session, with around 15 minutes to go before close of play. The Lotus driver's first timed lap is a 1:21.409s, good enough for P22.

Lewis Hamilton appears to be struggling in the final sector – he has set a few personal bests in sector one and two, but hasn't been able to turn that into an improved lap time. The McLaren driver is out on old rubber at the moment, as both he and Jenson Button complained of low grip on their first runs on the option tyres. But as is their wont on a Friday, the McLaren drivers are currently working on longer runs – as is Michael Schumacher – meaning it's unlikely we'll see improved lap times from this morning's three fastest men.

Only Barrichello, Kovalainen, and di Grassi are currently in the pits. We have just over 8 minutes remaining of FP2 in Montreal, and everyone is looking to learn as much about tyre and braking performance as they can in the limited running time remaining.

So what can we take away from FP2? First, cars that are confident in their speed around the circuit seem to be focussing on long runs and race pace. Second, that tyre graining is going to be an issue throughout the weekend – this could be the first race of the season where tyre management is a serious issue, and not just a theory to be discussed while running on hards for 90% of the race. Third, that Red Bull and Ferrari appear to have more pace on Circuit Gilles Villeneuve's long straights than they have been credited with.

Times will follow later – I have to run between media sessions, and there's no time to type them out.

F1 Canada Blog – FP3 live from Montreal

Roar! Elvis has left the building, and the cars are leaving the pitlane. The noise is magic.

It's a race to lay down rubber on the damp track at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, although no one's quite sure which rubber to coat the track with. Last night's rain and the variable weather conditions means this morning's session will be spent working out which tyres are going to be the best bet in today's qualifying session.

Grip was always going to be a problem here. The circuit demands low levels of downforce, meaning that teams and drivers have to rely on mechanical grip. And at a circuit where tyre graining is a given – especially on the rears – mechanical grip is an elusive mistress, and the balance is hard to find. The weather is further complicating the issue: last night's rain means we're looking at a green track this morning, and the conflicting reports of

rain/no rain for today and tomorrow make strategising even more difficult.

But the rubber race is off for the moment – after an initial flurry of pitlane activity, all is quiet for now. Fairly quiet, anyway – only Timo Glock and Lucas di Grassi are currently out on track, and Glock is the first man to post a time – 1.24.902s.

There were some media grumbles earlier about drinks in the media centre – apparently it is dangerous to have anything other than water in here, although no one is quite sure where the danger lurks. I've just been told that my empty water bottle constitutes a hazard, and have been ordered to get rid of it. Madness.

A few more drivers are out on track, testing the water as it were. Kamui Kobayashi, Sebastian Buemi, and Jaime Alguersuari are doing the rounds as I type, and Alguersuari goes fastest for Toro Rosso with a 1.22.156s. He is immediately dethroned by Kobayashi, who posts two quick laps in succession, peaking on 1.19.789s.

There are only 35 minutes remaining of the final practice session, and hardly anyone has completed a timed lap. But the pits are beginning to empty in earnest now – Robert Kubica, Nico Hulkenberg, Fernando Alonso, and Rubens Barrichello are out, and we're about to hit that point where the leaderboard shuffles non-stop.

Fernando Alonso is on a flying lap and sure to go straight to P1. And he does, with a 1.18.971s, before being instantly bested by Alguersuari's 1.18.862s.

Alguersuari is a man on a mission today. He has been performing admirably all season, but he and teammate Buemi were just ahead of the new teams in yesterday's sessions, not the result the team were hoping for. Although the young Spaniard keeps improving his times, he has just been bested by compatriot Alonso with a 1.18.275s.

With the session just over the half way mark, we now have fourteen times on the board. Lewis Hamilton goes fastest with a 1.17.489s – so much for my earlier concerns about McLaren's grip levels on the green track – and Jenson Button slots in just behind him with a 1.18.102s. Alonso is holding P3, with Alguersuari just behind.

The two Red Bull drivers have yet to set times. Sebastian Vettel is out on track, and should pop up on the leaderboard in an instant, while Mark Webber has just left the pits.

Michael Schumacher has just gone purple in the first sector, another sign that this could be a turning point in the seven-time world champion's comeback. He is now purple in sector two, and should be in line for P1. No – the German legend lost some time in the final sector, and crossed the line in P2.

Jenson Button immediately posted a 1.16.699s, putting him in P1 and jostling Schumacher down into P3. Vettel's first effort was a 1.7.387s, good enough for P4, but the real surprise is Tonio Luizzi, who was in P5 ahead of Alonso until Vitaly Petrov posted a P5-worthy 1.17.641s.

With just over twenty minutes remaining of this morning's session, only Karun Chandhok and Nico Rosberg have yet to set times. Chandhok has suffered another hydraulics problem, but there's no word yet on Rosberg.

Heikki Kovalainen is currently fastest of the new teams, repeating yesterday's successes. Immediately behind him is teammate Jarno Trulli, who had limited running on Friday thanks to an electrical fault with his gearbox.

At the top of the board Lewis Hamilton is sitting pretty for now, with a 1.16.259s, but the order has been changing throughout the top ten. As you'd expect, the shuffling takes place among the expected names – Button, Alonso, Webber, Vettel, Massa, Kubica, Schumacher. The surprises are Jaime Alguersuari and Kamui Kobayashi, who currently occupy ninth and tenth respectively.

Felipe Massa skimmed the wall a few minutes ago, sending up a shower of sparks, but not causing any obvious damage. The car is now back in the pits, being checked by the Ferrari bods, but it looks like all is well. And well it is – the Brazilian is back on track.

Teams are playing around with their tyre choices this morning, trying to get the measure of the relative performance on a damp and green track. Montreal is not a circuit where drivers want to go off the racing line – according to Lewis Hamilton, that leads to near-instantaneous marbling. We could see two-stop strategies in play tomorrow, although the weather will be the deciding factor there.

For the moment, there doesn't seem to be one perfect compound. Some teams are finding pace on the primes, while others prefer the option. It's all down to the balance in the car, how the machine works the rubber.

Lucas di Grassi has just come off at Turn 10, skating across the gravel as the chequered flag fell to mark the end of the final practice session.

Nico Rosberg had very limited running this morning – thanks to a clutch problem, he left the pits with less than five minutes remaining, and so had to make do with a P18. Not a result that is indicative of the Mercedes' pace at the circuit, just bad luck with the clutch.

And that ends the session. Lewis Hamilton is still top for McLaren, with Mark Webber and Fernando Alonso close behind. Given that the Ferraris, Red Bulls, Mercedes, and McLarens all seem to have similar pace around the circuit – assuming no one is sandbagging, that is – this afternoon's qualifying session should be a real nailbiter.

FP3 times (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.16.058s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.16.340s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.16.495s
4. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.16.536s

5. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.16.582s
6. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.16.653s
7. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.16.673s
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.16.699s
9. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.16.814s
10. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.16.982s
11. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.17.121s
12. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.17.231s
13. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.17.331s
14. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.17.548s
15. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.17.609s
16. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.17.633s
17. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.17.789s
18. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.17.979s
19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.19.013s
20. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.19.447s
21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.19.536s
22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.19.844s
23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.20.325s
24. Karun Chandhok (HRT) no time set

F1 Canada Blog: Q1 in Montreal

The paddock is getting noisy as engines are fired up and cars prepared for Q1 at Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. And with the pitlane open, the first twenty minute session has begun.

The sun came out in the two-hour gap between practice and qualifying, and there is no sign of rain to come. Track temperature has climbed to 30 degrees – I believe the peak of the weekend thus far – and air temperature is currently 22 degrees.

Timo Glock is the first man to set a time, and the pits are now emptying in earnest. Still in the garage are both Mercedes drivers, the McLaren pair, and both Red Bulls, but in the time it's taken me to type that sentence they have begun to file out on track.

No one is currently in the dropout zone, as we've got too much time left to run for the bottom seven to mean anything, especially when they have yet to post times.

Karun Chandhok has set a time and returned to the pits, while Robert Kubica is the only driver yet to have begun a lap.

Fernando Alonso is currently fastest on the boards, with a 1.17.864s set on the harder compound, but he is the only big name to have set a time so far. Adrian Sutil and Nico Hulkenberg have since claimed the top spot, but Alonso responded on his next lap with a 1.17.255s, worthy of P1.

Tonio Liuzzi is continuing to display surprising pace based on recent performances – so far this weekend he has regularly popped up in the top ten, often posting faster times than teammate Sutil.

Alonso is now trading P1 with a host of other drivers – Mark Webber claimed top spot for a while, before Alonso took it back. Lewis Hamilton is currently top with a 1.15.889s, but how long will it last? Top eight right now: Hamilton, Alonso, Webber, Rosberg, Sutil, Vettel, Massa, Schumacher. Jenson Button is in P9, just over a second slower than his teammate.

Robert Kubica is in the dropout zone, but only because he's just started his first timed lap. And with the lap complete, the Pole is in P9 with a 1.16.843s. The dropout zone consists of the six drivers from the new teams and Kamui Kobayashi, with just over six minutes remaining.

Rubens Barrichello, Nico Hulkenberg, Jaime Alguersuari, Sebastian Buemi, and Pedro de la Rosa are all at risk of dropping out if the new teams find some extra pace, but for as long as Kobayashi remains in the garage it looks as though he will be the one lining up with the new boys at the back of Sunday's grid.

Felipe Massa and Michael Schumacher are currently in P10 and P9 respectively, the only front runners to be significantly slower than their teammates in this twenty minute window.

Hulkenberg has just pulled out a 1.16.770s, catapulting him into P11 and away from the danger zone.

With just under two minutes remaining, the top eight drivers are all in the pits. In order, that's: Hamilton, Vettel, Alonso, Rosberg, Kubica, Button, Webber, Sutil. They are out of time when it comes to setting new lap times, but all are safe as can be when it comes to making it through to Q2.

Kobayashi and Pedro de la Rosa are both out on track, battling for P17. Kobayashi is currently in P18, fractionally behind his teammate. One Sauber driver will not see Q2. Which one?

Dropout zone:

18. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.18.019s
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.18.237s
20. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.18.698s

21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:18.941s
 22. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1:19.484s
 23. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1:19.675s
 24. Karun Chandhok (HRT) 1:27.757s
-

F1 Canada Blog – Q2 in Montreal

So we have the last seven places set on the back of the grid, and there were no huge surprises when it came to the finishing order.

The big surprise was Heikki Kovalainen for Lotus – not only was he a mere 0.218s slower than the Sauber of Kamui Kobayashi (the smallest margin of the season between new team and old), but he was only 2.2 seconds slower than pace setter Lewis Hamilton, an impressive feat. Lotus really are improving with every race, reliability issues aside. (After all, they're only to be expected with a new team who had about twenty minutes to design, build, and homologate their car.)

Q2 is now underway, and the fifteen minute countdown has begun.

At the top of the board times are changing every time a car crosses the line. We have had Williams, Force India, Ferrari, and McLaren all on the top spot briefly, and P1 times are hovering in the low 1:16s.

Current top eight is Alonso, Hamilton, Vettel, Webber, Kubica, Sutil, Schumacher, Button. But that list is already invalid. Times at the top of the board are in the 1:15s and falling all the time.

In the dropout zone, lapping in the 1:17s, are Hulkenberg, de la Rosa, Buemi, Alguersuari, Petrov, Barrichello, and Liuzzi. We are half way through Q2, and anything can happen in the time remaining. I say anything, but it seems very unlikely that Hamilton, Vettel, Kubica, Alonso, Rosberg, Webber, or Massa are anxious about dropping out in this session.

Jenson Button and Michael Schumacher are currently in P9 and P10, so could be at risk from strong laps by Barrichello or Liuzzi, both of whom are only a few tenths behind. Neither Button or Schumacher is currently out on track, and it is likely that they will both consolidate their place in Q3 when on fresh rubber.

Barrichello is on a fast lap now, so we shall see what comes of it. The Brazilian doesn't look like improving much, if at all – he's yet to go green in any sector, so we may have already seen the best Rubens has to offer.

With three minutes remaining, all drivers are out on the circuit. Button appears to be having serious grip issues, struggling with his car as it slides across the surface of the track. Liuzzi has just popped up in P9, pushing Schumacher into the dropout zone and Button into P10. This is getting nail-biting.

But Button has just found the pace for P7, and the current world champion should be safe for a place in Q3. The same cannot be said for Michael Schumacher in P11, and P10 Felipe Massa is on shaky ground.

And Michael Schumacher is out. Wow. He was doing well in the practice sessions, and he's won in Montreal more times than I've had hot dinners. This is a very unexpected turn of events.

Dropout zone:

11. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:16.434s
 12. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1:16.438s
 13. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:16.692s
 14. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1:16.844s
 15. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1:16.928s
 16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:17.029s
 17. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1:17.384s
-

F1 Canada Blog – Q3 in Montreal

Schumacher out in Q2. Who woulda thunk it? Not me – I had the German down as scoring his first podium of the season here in Montreal. Of course, anything can happen at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve – safety cars, threatening walls, possible rain, and bad luck gremlins can turn a poor result on Saturday into a good finish on Sunday.

As Heikki Kovalainen said in his exclusive interview with girlracer – go read it now if you haven't already – the key to Montreal is being ready to take advantage of every opportunity the circuit affords you. A poor starting position is no guarantee of a finish outside the points.

And they're off. The final qualifying session is now under way, and in less than ten minutes time we will know all the answers. Is Sebastian Vettel going to pull off pole position? The young German does have a few things to prove this weekend. Can Jenson Button find the grip that's coming so easily to his teammate? Will Fernando Alonso pull Ferrari out of its funk with a P1 finish? Who knows – but it's going to be great finding out.

Lewis Hamilton's first lap is a mind-boggling 1:15.500s, and teammate Button is next on the board, nearly a second down on his teammate. Button heads straight back to the pits – new tyres? A tweak in set-up? Whatever happened to the car at Friday lunchtime is really putting a downer on the

Somerset lad's weekend – fastest on Friday morning, and shaky ever since.

Early lap times are pretty low – hovering in the 1.17s, but as soon as the tyres warm up the times begin to tumble. Hamilton's P1 is safe for now, but Mark Webber has just posted a 1.15.990s, just under half a second shy. And if there's one thing Webber can do it's find qualifying times that defy the laws of physics. Witchcraft, I tell you. And a bit of Adrian Newey.

Sebastian Vettel is now trying too hard – he's been fast but ragged all weekend, and it reeks of desperation. Some juvenile mistakes, some wanders off track. It's not looking good.

With less than a minute to go, it's all change at the top of the board. Alonso briefly dethroned Hamilton for P1, but then Webber lapped in 1.15.373s, taking provisional pole. Again. Hamilton's out now, but it's not looking good – he's not green in any sector, never mind purple. Will Ferrari have a front row start with Alonso in P2? I could be speaking too soon, but it looks like it now...

I did speak too soon. Finished the sentence, and Vettel popped up in P2 with a 1.15.420s. Hamilton is out for his final lap and doing much better – purple in sector one, green in sector two, and pole position for the Brit! Absolutely fabulous for McLaren fans, frustrating beyond belief for the tifosi.

So, the first non-Red Bull pole of the season goes to Lewis Hamilton in Montreal. But with two red Bulls behind him, the McLaren driver will be thanking his lucky stars the FIA have changed wing mirror regulations, allowing drivers to see what's coming at them from behind.

Provisional grid:

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.15.105s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.15.373s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.15.420s
4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.15.435s
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.15.520s
6. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.15.648s
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.15.688s
8. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.15.715s
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.15.881s
10. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.16.071s
11. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.16.434s
12. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.16.438s
13. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.16.692s
14. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.16.844s
15. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.16.928s
16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.17.029s
17. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.17.384s
18. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.18.019s
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.18.237s
20. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.18.698s
21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.18.941s
22. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.19.484s
23. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.19.675s
24. Karun Chandhok (HRT) 1.27.757s

F1 Canada Blog: Red Bull in P2 shocker

Be still my foolish heart. Bring out the smelling salts. For the first time in 2010, the pole sitter for Sunday's race will not be wearing Red Bull's team kit.

Putting an end to Red Bull's era of qualifying dominance is McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton, who has claimed his third successive pole at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. The young British driver has secured pole at every Canadian Grand Prix since 2007, but retired from the 2008 race as a result of a pit lane 'incident' with Kimi Raikkonen. Incident being a euphemism for 'accidentally rear-ended'.

But while Red Bull missed out on pole position by the skin of Mark Webber's teeth, the team managed to secure second and third spots on tomorrow's grid. So much for the assumption that McLaren would dominate the Montreal weekend – Lewis Hamilton may have claimed pole, but current world champion Jenson Button continued to struggle with grip, eventually finishing in P5.

Tyres are the big story for tomorrow's race. Both Red Bull drivers set their qualifying times on the harder compound, while Lewis Hamilton elected to run on the softer option tyre. According to Sebastian Vettel in the post-qualifying press conference, it is "difficult [to get the option tyre to] last more than a couple of laps".

Hamilton agreed, saying "the option tyre is not the best, it goes off quite quickly". But the added speed in qualifying makes up for the tyre degradation, especially at a track where most teams expect to see an early safety car.

But are McLaren putting all of their eggs in the early safety car basket? If so, it's a gamble worth taking. The past three days in Canada have seen chilly mornings, with the sun not appearing till early afternoon. Sunday's race begins at noon local time, and based on recent data, track temperatures will be around 24 degrees. This will hinder tyre performance, but it will be easier for drivers on the softer compounds to warm up their tyres, giving an initial – theoretical – advantage to Hamilton over the two Red Bulls behind.

Of course, this assumes that Hamilton's pole will stand – there is a small chance that the FIA will look unfavourably on the Brit's return to the pits. The McLaren driver was so low on fuel when he crossed the line that he was told on team radio that he wouldn't have enough fuel for the FIA-mandated sample if he returned to the pits under petrol power. So after a brief coast, the former champion pushed his car along the track until he was collected by a safety car.

I have just been issued with an FIA press release concerning the above incident – Hamilton was found to be in breach of Article 15.1 of the Sporting Regulations, but has been issued with a reprimand. His punishment comes in the form of a \$10,000 fine, but the McLaren driver's pole position stands.

Looking further down the grid for tomorrow's race, there are some interesting faces in unexpected places. Tonio Liuzzi qualified in sixth place with a 1:15.648s, ahead of not only his teammate, but the Ferrari of Felipe Massa, the Renault of Robert Kubica, and both Mercedes drivers. It was a sterling performance from Liuzzi, who has been surrounded with replacement rumours for much of the season. His place in the team is at least assured for the next few weeks.

Towards the end of the qualifying session it briefly looked as though Fernando Alonso would be on the front row. But fast laps from Hamilton and Vettel put paid to that at the eleventh hour, and the Ferrari driver will be starting from P4, just ahead of Jenson Button. While it is not the dominating performance the Scuderia were hoping for, P4 is a significant step up from Alonso's recent qualifying results – both Monaco and Turkey were Saturdays best forgotten in Maranello.

Mercedes struggled on track in qualifying, with Michael Schumacher dropping out in Q2 and Nico Rosberg securing a P10 start. This is in stark contrast to the team's strong performances in the practice sessions, and the received wisdom that Mercedes-powered cars with variants on F-ducts would be tough to beat on the linked straights at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

There are too many variables in play to make any predictions about tomorrow. While today was unexpectedly sunny, Sunday's forecast still reads scattered thunderstorms. Whether these strike during the race is anyone's guess – as we learned in Malaysia, hi-tech weather radar isn't the most reliable source out there. Once you take into account track temperatures, variable tyre degradation, a mix of compounds in the top ten, and the likelihood of multiple safety cars, Sunday's results are anyone's guess.

Looking toward the back of the grid, there is a real chance that Lotus could leave the backmarkers and take the fight to the mid-field, reliability issues notwithstanding. Heikki Kovalainen has been running well all weekend, and finished Q1 0.218s behind the Sauber of Kamui Kobayashi, the best result thus far for a new team.

Sauber are concerned about the performance of their car here, whereas Lotus are pleased with theirs. The Sauber pilots both struggled with grip on Saturday afternoon, but Kovalainen is gaining in confidence in his car. "I've had a decent balance all weekend, and yesterday I didn't have any problems, so I could find a good setup and had the confidence to push. We just need to find a little more to really take the fight to the guys in front, but tomorrow I think we can race them: I think we can have a go."

Keep your fingers crossed that conditions play into Kovalainen's hands – we have been waiting eight races to see a new team tangle with a more established outfit, the real vindication of their presence on the grid.

F1 Canada Blog – The Canadian Grand Prix as it happened

With less than five minutes to go before the race begins, it's looking to be an absolute nail-biter of a race. There is no sign of the rumoured thunderstorms, meaning the first ten drivers will start on their qualifying rubber, but we might see rain during the race. Looks unlikely now, but...

The biggest story is Mark Webber's grid drop – a replacement gearbox has seen the Australian driver drop to P7, thanks to FIA regulations. This has promoted Fernando Alonso to P3, a move to the inside line. Ferrari could be a team to watch here – their tyre degradation isn't as pronounced as some of the others', although they can have trouble getting the rubber up to temperature, which could delay Alonso's start.

Track temperature is currently 38 degrees, while air temperature is 25 degrees. This is the warmest it's been all weekend, which should keep things interesting.

Sebastian Vettel is starting today's race with a new clutch and steering wheel, but has not violated any regulations so will start in P2. Webber's gearbox was found to contain bits of shrapnel, which is why it had to be replaced.

My original plan was to write this as the race happened, but too much was going on, and I didn't want to miss a thing. This is a real nail-biter of a race, constant action. Wheel to wheel racing, actual overtaking manoeuvres, and Alonso and Hamilton battling for the lead. Could it get any better than this?

Of course, being a modern, connected, internet addicted kind of girl, I couldn't let the race pass without a commentary with a contact back home. I try and keep links to the UK open so I can get as full a picture of the race as possible – watching from the press room, it's all too easy to get sucked into the live timing screens and miss incidents on track.

I have to leave the circuit very shortly to make my flight. Once I've checked in I can use the free WiFi to file an analysis piece, but for the moment, here's a Skype chat liveblog of the Montreal race. Edited only to remove swearing.

[16:55:42] Kate Walker: Hahaha! I love the bulls that were on the telly a minute ago - did you see them?

[16:56:01] [redacted]: no i missed it

[16:56:21] Kate Walker: Damn. Bull face masks with horns, and then tyres where their ears should be.

[16:56:29] ... About four blokes. They looked wicked.

[16:56:48] [redacted]: will have to keep an eye out for them again

[16:58:18] ... i like the crazy golf ball shaped thing
[16:58:32] ... looks wicked
[16:58:50] Kate Walker: It was built for the expo in 67, but the plastic shall was destroyed in a fire in 79. The frame still stands, and has been used in a number of movies.
[16:58:58] ... (Go past it on the shuttle every day.)
[16:59:12] [redacted]: live timings have just started up
[16:59:17] Kate Walker: It is awesome, especially with storm clouds behind it.
[16:59:25] ... We've got them on screen now.
[16:59:53] ... Right, I need to focus on the race, but I will keep Skyping you. Let me know if anything happens I might not have heard/spotted, especially radio transmissions.
[17:00:06] [redacted]: Liuzzi did really well
[17:00:24] Kate Walker: Because he is awesome
[17:00:54] [redacted]: ok will keep you up to date with anything interesting
[17:04:53] Kate Walker: Ready, steady...
[17:05:06] ... GO!
[17:05:36] [redacted]: carnage off the line
[17:06:35] Kate Walker: What happened to massa
[17:07:00] [redacted]: massa and Liuzzi came together
[17:07:09] Kate Walker: Saw liu, not mas
[17:07:21] [redacted]: kobayashi just lost his front wing when he ran into the wall
[17:07:52] ... massa is in the pit
[17:08:04] ... liuzzi and massa hit each other 3 times
[17:09:15] ... kobayashi is out
[17:09:25] Kate Walker: Nice train behind but
[17:09:25] [redacted]: shame for liuzzi
[17:09:30] ... yeah
[17:09:59] ... webbbers pushing hard
[17:10:04] Kate Walker: Think he'll do it?
[17:10:11] [redacted]: maybe
[17:10:31] ... tried to take him up the inside into turn 3
[17:10:31] Kate Walker: Think he's got it in him
[17:11:31] ... mas purple
[17:11:43] [redacted]: webber is through
[17:12:09] ... mas looks like he purposely drove into liuzzi at least twice
[17:12:21] Kate Walker: That's what I thought
[17:12:35] ... Liu was fine, Mas pushed him off at least twice
[17:12:42] ... Racing incident, or penalty?
[17:12:42] [redacted]: kov in 12
[17:12:58] ... not sure
[17:13:45] ... vettels having a go at hamilton
[17:13:54] ... button in pits
[17:14:28] ... vettels all over him
[17:14:38] Kate Walker: web on alo
[17:14:52] ... ham pit
[17:15:00] [redacted]: ham in too
[17:15:27] ... alonso and ham racing out of the pits
[17:15:59] ... wheel to wheel all the way out
[17:16:11] Kate Walker: Yup, saw it
[17:16:14] ... crazy
[17:16:24] ... Ham out ahead of but
[17:16:32] [redacted]: just
[17:16:52] ... kov in 7th
[17:17:01] ... i think you're a good luck charm
[17:18:56] Kate Walker: I hope so. Maybe I can hang with him before every race!
[17:19:11] ... car 12 jump start, that's petrov
[17:20:08] ... but purple in s2
[17:20:56] ... dig pll? wtf?
[17:21:17] ... but purple
[17:22:02] [redacted]: vettel webber lapping 2 sec a lap slower than but
[17:23:17] ... jensons on fire
[17:23:56] ... buemi in 2nd WTF?
[17:24:20] Kate Walker: buemi leading!
[17:24:22] ... but yet to pit
[17:24:31] [redacted]: i know
[17:24:52] ... vettel on softs
[17:24:58] ... msc in pit
[17:25:07] Kate Walker: msc should get penalty for that
[17:25:15] ... lewis lost a race for much the same, spa 2008
[17:25:18] ... had result cancelled
[17:25:42] ... fab bue alo ham battle
[17:25:57] [redacted]: hamilton past alonso
[17:26:12] Kate Walker: thats more like it

[17:26:23] ... yay f duct
[17:26:28] [redacted]: exciting race so far
[17:26:43] ... and only lap 12
[17:26:49] Kate Walker: why sen ret?
[17:26:48] [redacted]: senna out
[17:27:00] Kate Walker: lap 16, you mean
[17:27:04] [redacted]: don't know
[17:27:33] Kate Walker: tell me if they say?
[17:27:46] [redacted]: tyre deg is much worse than the teams had thought
[17:27:56] Kate Walker: yup, that was a given
[17:27:55] [redacted]: way worse
[17:28:01] Kate Walker: track temp nearly double fpl
[17:28:16] [redacted]: quite possible alot of cars might have to 3 stop
[17:28:18] Kate Walker: 39 deg atm, was 30 when i got here at 8.30
[17:28:55] ... but slower now, no purple
[17:28:58] ... tyres?
[17:29:09] [redacted]: yeah
[17:29:09] Kate Walker: rosberg on fire! (speed, not flames)
[17:29:24] [redacted]: yeah
[17:29:39] ... buemi still in 8th
[17:29:43] ... not bad
[17:30:09] Kate Walker: not at all - they were pants in fp, all sessions
[17:30:20] ... ros purple again!
[17:31:50] ... hot damn this is awesome
[17:32:05] [redacted]: yeah
[17:32:14] ... much more exciting
[17:32:20] Kate Walker: was going to write as it happened, but cant tear self away from screen
[17:35:17] ... but needs to close gap to alo
[17:35:23] ... use your fduct!
[17:35:46] ... web going green
[17:36:11] ... ha to schu in pl2
[17:36:26] [redacted]: hehehe
[17:36:49] Kate Walker: karma
[17:37:26] ... looks to have settled a bit for middle portion of race
[17:37:37] ... can you believe we're 37 mins in? feels like 2
[17:37:44] [redacted]: yeah
[17:38:13] Kate Walker: pet got drive through for causing collision?
[17:39:02] [redacted]: not sure
[17:39:18] Kate Walker: it's on the boards - he's been given d/t for causing a collision
[17:39:27] ... assume it was schu incident, didn't see another with him
[17:39:34] ... or was that kubs schu nearly hit?
[17:39:56] ... no, was kubs
[17:40:03] ... pet must have been off the start
[17:40:29] [redacted]: i think he got a drive through for jumping the start
[17:40:41] Kate Walker: and another one just now
[17:40:49] ... i am reading the steward report
[17:40:55] ... just don't know what the incident was
[17:40:55] [redacted]: hamilton pits
[17:41:08] Kate Walker: lap 27?
[17:41:10] ... can't see
[17:41:59] [redacted]: can't see at the mo
[17:42:07] ... replay
[17:42:20] ... but and vet in pit
[17:42:28] ... lap 28
[17:43:02] ... sutil had a puncture
[17:43:22] ... drive through pen for car 10
[17:43:27] ... speeding in pit
[17:43:29] Kate Walker: hulk speed in pit lane
[17:43:41] ... can read all the penalties from here, just don't always know why
[17:44:48] [redacted]: alonso got stuck behind a lotus
[17:45:01] ... that's why he's behind ham
[17:45:33] ... web has big lead now
[17:45:55] ... but more stops to come
[17:46:13] ... who knows what could happen in the next 1hr or so
[17:46:17] Kate Walker: yup, esp for rbr
[17:46:25] [redacted]: all of them
[17:46:27] Kate Walker: is web on softs now? can't see
[17:46:30] ... no, primes
[17:46:34] ... he has to pit at least once more
[17:46:59] ... ham has used both compounds, so if he can get them to last w/o a 3rd stop...
[17:47:19] [redacted]: ham will have to stop again
[17:47:35] Kate Walker: unhealthy engine just went past

[17:47:38] ... sounded awful
[17:47:43] [redacted]: really
[17:47:47] ... bmw sauber
[17:47:50] Kate Walker: not sure who - maybe trulli in pits?
[17:47:55] [redacted]: de la rosa
[17:48:03] Kate Walker: what did he do?
[17:48:05] [redacted]: out gone bang
[17:48:09] Kate Walker: hit wall, or bad engine?
[17:48:18] ... ha it was dlr I heard!
[17:48:18] [redacted]: engine just let go
[17:48:23] Kate Walker: that's really funny - you could hear it happening
[17:48:32] [redacted]: i know
[17:48:52] Kate Walker: you could deffo hear it
[17:48:58] [redacted]: yeah
[17:49:13] Kate Walker: sounded like an old smoker's cough
[17:49:15] ... but louder
[17:49:21] [redacted]: hahaha :D
[17:49:41] ... msc back up to 9
[17:49:58] Kate Walker: web pulled out 2s on ham
[17:50:16] [redacted]: i think there's gonna be alot more pit stops
[17:50:23] ... yeah
[17:50:45] Kate Walker: there's got to be at this rate
[17:50:50] [redacted]: web still has to pit again at least once though for option tyres
[17:50:50] Kate Walker: we're only just coming to half way
[17:51:02] ... 10s isn't enough to pit
[17:51:10] [redacted]: nope
[17:51:30] ... msc back in pit again
[17:51:55] Kate Walker: web getting faster all the time - lls now
[17:52:00] [redacted]: vettel not planning to stop again
[17:52:06] Kate Walker: or is ham getting slower?
[17:52:14] ... not planning to, but his brakes might force him to
[17:52:22] [redacted]: no still running about the same times
[17:52:28] ... or tyres
[17:52:48] ... mas just set fastest lap
[17:53:00] Kate Walker: think one of the rbrs could overheat and fail, what with their cooling issues
[17:53:35] [redacted]: i think they've hedged there bets running 2 different strategies
[17:53:40] Kate Walker: toro rossos surprisingly good
[17:53:46] ... seems the sensible choice
[17:53:48] [redacted]: yeah
[17:53:58] ... 8 & 9
[17:54:03] Kate Walker: also means they won't both be on comparable rubber, avoiding overtaking problems through strategy.
[17:54:09] ... (rbr, that is)
[17:54:50] [redacted]: kub and sut to be investigated after race
[17:55:00] ... race incident
[17:55:02] Kate Walker: ham/web gap has stabilised
[17:55:06] [redacted]: not sure what
[17:55:35] Kate Walker: and barr/alg too
[17:55:41] ... investigated after race, dunno why
[17:56:14] [redacted]: but on fire again
[17:56:19] ... purple
[17:56:59] ... ham now purple
[17:57:14] [redacted]: 1.18.8
[17:57:23] ... fastest lap
[17:58:43] [redacted]: ham is closing quick
[17:58:54] ... webb's tyres are starting to fall apart
[17:59:15] ... i reckon i could do a live blog of this
[17:59:17] Kate Walker: ta!
[17:59:21] ... you should. :)
[17:59:31] ... can i just publish this chat instead of a piece?
[17:59:31] [redacted]: is my info good enough for you
[17:59:37] Kate Walker: totes
[17:59:51] [redacted]: totes?
[18:00:01] Kate Walker: totally
[18:00:06] [redacted]: oh
[18:00:36] Kate Walker: should know not to netspeak w/ you to save time, as you don't know the shorthand
[18:00:36] ... doh
[18:00:44] ... vet purple
[18:00:55] [redacted]: learning more every time we chat
[18:01:03] Kate Walker: mass loses control a bit w/ force india!
[18:01:24] [redacted]: oops
[18:01:27] Kate Walker: ham/web gap down to 8.8
[18:01:35] [redacted]: just showed a replay

[18:01:44] ... said ham was flying
[18:01:52] Kate Walker: you did
[18:02:00] ... mas pits
[18:02:18] ... want hk to take bar
[18:02:42] [redacted]: yeah
[18:02:47] ... hope so
[18:03:13] ... sutil is all over hulkenberg
[18:03:52] Kate Walker: alo purple now
[18:03:57] [redacted]: webber needs to stop
[18:04:09] Kate Walker: want liu to beat sut; needs it to keep the drive
[18:04:32] [redacted]: losing; he's got to get past alg first
[18:04:39] Kate Walker: gap down to 6.6s...
[18:04:51] ... (web/ham)
[18:05:10] ... track temp dropped to 36 deg
[18:05:18] [redacted]: tyres just falling apart
[18:05:24] Kate Walker: alo purple again
[18:05:30] ... every sector this time
[18:05:40] [redacted]: web rear tyres are knackered
[18:05:58] Kate Walker: gaps now 4.8
[18:06:03] ... when is web going to stop?
[18:06:17] ... just get it over with, or risk a blowout, numpty!
[18:06:24] [redacted]: don't know
[18:06:42] Kate Walker: he'd come in p6, and everyone in front looks like they'll need to pit before it ends
[18:06:43] [redacted]: think he's lost it now
[18:06:51] Kate Walker: 3.6s and falling...
[18:07:15] [redacted]: apparently vet engineer said cars in front are running till end
[18:07:37] ... poss inc web
[18:07:42] Kate Walker: didn't pit this lap...
[18:07:48] ... vet engineer isn't psychic
[18:08:03] [redacted]: no don't think he's going to by the sounds of it
[18:08:18] Kate Walker: all except web have 2 stopped
[18:08:20] ... tru out
[18:08:25] [redacted]: trulli brakes died
[18:08:28] ... out
[18:08:44] Kate Walker: web/ham gap now 3.1s
[18:08:48] [redacted]: vettel is managing an issue
[18:08:57] ... not sure what
[18:09:08] ... prob brakes
[18:09:10] Kate Walker: tru stopped in pits, right?
[18:09:18] ... i assume it's brakes or heat
[18:09:23] [redacted]: maybe fuel
[18:09:29] Kate Walker: gap now 1.7 for ham/web
[18:09:37] ... 0.4 ham/alo
[18:09:40] [redacted]: as they were all expecting a safety car
[18:09:42] Kate Walker: this is getting very close now
[18:09:46] ... yup
[18:09:53] ... and we're 46 laps in w/ no SC
[18:09:56] ... odd for CAN
[18:09:57] [redacted]: they might have short fueled slightly
[18:10:12] Kate Walker: ham is so going to take web in a min
[18:10:13] [redacted]: what do you think
[18:10:26] ... i think so
[18:10:30] Kate Walker: think you're right, esp with fuel weight adding to brake heat early on
[18:10:37] [redacted]: exactly
[18:10:42] Kate Walker: gap now 0.5s
[18:11:01] ... massive traffic in mid field, force indias, mass, etc
[18:11:08] [redacted]: ham will take him in next few corners or so i think
[18:11:09] Kate Walker: could get hairy
[18:11:13] ... think so.
[18:11:17] ... ooh
[18:11:24] ... going for it
[18:11:28] ... YES!!!
[18:11:35] ... alo about to try too
[18:11:45] [redacted]: ham has him at end of pit straight
[18:11:49] Kate Walker: web so should have pitted for new rubber
[18:12:16] ... this is getting embarrassing
[18:12:25] ... alo nearly had him on hairpin
[18:12:34] ... i smell bahrain...
[18:12:41] ... web pits at last
[18:12:46] ... worst. timing. ever.
[18:12:53] [redacted]: yeah
[18:13:06] ... close at the top

[18:13:09] Kate Walker: comes in p5
[18:13:15] ... fool
[18:13:19] [redacted]: only 4 sec separating
[18:13:40] Kate Walker: 1.9s alo/ham
[18:13:53] ... what happened to button?
[18:13:58] ... he's there, but insignificant atm
[18:14:44] [redacted]: vettel's engineer radio is broken
[18:14:44] Kate Walker: they've lapped all the way to p9
[18:15:25] ... bue's next to get lapped, should happen around lap 58
[18:15:32] [redacted]: only way messages getting through is via christian horner
[18:15:33] Kate Walker: doh!
[18:15:41] ... so he's racing on his own?
[18:16:15] ... think ham needs new rubber
[18:17:00] ... ham now 2.7s gap to alo, even with that graining
[18:17:16] [redacted]: but caught alonso quickly
[18:17:17] Kate Walker: but getting a bit faster
[18:17:43] [redacted]: 0.7 off of alonso
[18:17:50] Kate Walker: how long did it take mas to pass that lot?
[18:17:52] ... MONTHS
[18:18:07] ... felipe baby, for sure you need to be a bit faster
[18:18:10] [redacted]: glock in pit
[18:18:11] Kate Walker: why bother? he can keep crawling around on his tyres for the rest of the race, won't make a difference to the result
[18:18:52] ... but/alo now 0.6s
[18:19:18] [redacted]: both virgins still running
[18:19:18] Kate Walker: just don't see why VR bothered bringing him in
[18:19:27] ... that's unusual!
[18:19:30] [redacted]: glock is out
[18:19:40] Kate Walker: alo found some speed - 1.1 gap to but
[18:19:42] [redacted]: spoke to soon eh
[18:19:51] ... only one virgin now
[18:19:52] Kate Walker: you cursed them!
[18:20:29] ... schumacher next to be lapped
[18:20:36] ... how rofl would that make you?
[18:20:35] [redacted]: but past alonso
[18:20:53] Kate Walker: and schuey lapped
[18:21:00] [redacted]: ham but 1 2
[18:21:12] Kate Walker: when did but take alo?
[18:21:16] ... didn't see it
[18:21:34] [redacted]: not sure
[18:21:43] ... just hoping for a replay
[18:21:50] Kate Walker: sch got blue flags!
[18:22:09] [redacted]: i think another car got in the way of alonso and button nipped round the outside
[18:22:22] [redacted]: but just lapped schu
[18:22:35] Kate Walker: yup
[18:22:38] ... been lapped a lot
[18:23:37] Kate Walker: but now lapping 0.3s faster than ham
[18:23:40] [redacted]: but might catch him
[18:24:13] Kate Walker: can't believe we've only got 10 laps to go
[18:24:17] ... this is the fastest race ever
[18:24:30] ... tyres aren't looking awful, but they're not great
[18:24:56] [redacted]: down to 2.2
[18:25:30] Kate Walker: kubs pits?
[18:26:12] ... bue taking schu!
[18:26:28] [redacted]: buemi took msc
[18:26:29] Kate Walker: that was awesome
[18:26:36] [redacted]: i know
[18:26:46] Kate Walker: press room cheered
[18:27:33] [redacted]: ham fastest lap
[18:27:35] Kate Walker: gap to but now 2.4
[18:28:03] ... kub purple s2
[18:28:32] ... kub purple
[18:29:51] [redacted]: msc tyres have had it
[18:30:23] Kate Walker: ham/but gap now 3.6s
[18:30:31] ... did you see mas?
[18:30:31] ... oops
[18:30:49] [redacted]: msc just swiped massa broke his front wing
[18:30:55] Kate Walker: doh
[18:30:57] ... ret soon?
[18:31:10] [redacted]: made a second move into him
[18:31:15] Kate Walker: or finish? only a few laps to go, and his race can't go much worse
[18:31:30] ... no incidents reported on steward screen here, obviously fine with them
[18:31:38] ... mas in pit, new wing

[18:31:43] [redacted]: mas in
[18:31:53] Kate Walker: liu ahead of sut, yay!
[18:32:03] ... let's keep that force india seat, liu!
[18:32:09] [redacted]: liuzzi in the points
[18:32:19] Kate Walker: sut not...
[18:32:34] ... looks like kov will finish right behind a ferrari
[18:32:34] ... awesome
[18:32:44] ... but goes green
[18:32:56] ... ham gap now 3.9s
[18:33:00] ... alo 2s behind
[18:33:50] ... here we go - schu/mas incident to be investigated after the race
[18:34:26] [redacted]: i thought that might happen
[18:34:48] Kate Walker: can't believe they've lapped to p7
[18:34:54] ... i know it's a short track, but still
[18:35:05] ... but closing on ham, gap down to 3.5s
[18:35:20] ... will the frome flyer make a silly move and hand the race to alo?
[18:35:37] ... gap down to 3.2s
[18:36:35] [redacted]: liuzzi might get msc
[18:36:36] Kate Walker: liu trying to pass schu
[18:36:39] ... snap!
[18:36:50] ... kubs purple again - he's on fire
[18:36:56] ... ooh, liu!!!
[18:37:02] ... schu cuts chicane
[18:37:08] ... where have i seen that before?
[18:38:43] ... but/ham gap down to 3.1s
[18:38:52] [redacted]: yay lewis and jenson
[18:39:05] ... yay
[18:39:17] Kate Walker: is that a third mclaren l-2 i spy?
[18:39:24] ... rocket red shirts for everyone!
[18:39:34] ... why is rocket red actually orange, btw?
[18:39:38] ... never got that
[18:39:56] [redacted]: liuzzi through
[18:39:59] Kate Walker: schu can't stop cutting chicanes
[18:40:09] ... schu no points - pll
[18:40:12] [redacted]: liuzzi and sutil through on last corner
[18:40:42] Kate Walker: go liu!
[18:40:51] ... his seat is safe for another week at least
[18:41:00] ... yay lewis!
[18:41:04] ... yay mclaren!
[18:41:04] [redacted]: vettel stopped out on track
[18:41:14] Kate Walker: boo to webber for not pitting soon enough

F1 Canada Blog – The round-up

Yes, it's Tuesday, and the race was Sunday. I'm sorry. But I couldn't get my laptop to connect to the WiFi at the airport in Montreal, and I've been either at the office or dead to the world since landing at 7.30 on Monday morning.

Waiting for the last flight to London on Sunday, the airport lounge was a reasonable facsimile of the media room and paddock. In addition to mechanics, engineers, and reserve drivers aplenty, there were a number of famous media faces and voices, not to mention a host of journalists and photographers.

When we were experiencing pretty rough turbulence in the middle of the night, I had a particularly morbid thought – in the event of the flight going down, coverage of the European Grand Prix at Valencia would see a severe reduction in coverage.

But, on to the racing.

Will there be a better race this season than the Montreal Grand Prix? It's theoretically possible, but highly unlikely. Canada had it all – differing tyre strategies, challenging track conditions, overtaking wherever you cared to look, and a host of lead changes. In fact, the only thing we didn't get was the safety car most had assumed would be a given.

At various points on Sunday it looked as though the race belonged to Mark Webber, to Fernando Alonso – even, for one brief lap – to Sebastian Buemi. While the Toro Rosso driver may not have been a likely winner, given that he had yet to pit for the second tyre compound at the time, the team highlighted their mini victory in the post-race press release.

"In case you didn't notice ... we led for a lap" was the title of their press release. Buemi was understandably proud of his trifold achievement – "eighth place, lading the race, and passing Michael. What a day!"

So what were the moments that mattered? That depends on your perspective. Felipe Massa's race was as good as finished on the first lap, when he and Tonio Liuzzi came into contact again and again, with front ends flying and a quick return to the pits. While Liuzzi was able to charge through the field, eventually finishing in a respectable ninth place, Massa's day went from bad to worse.

The Ferrari driver spent an inordinate amount of time behind the Lotus of Heikki Kovalainen, not a battle anyone would have predicted before the lights went out. Adding insult to injury, the Brazilian was issued a 20 second penalty for speeding in the pitlane in the final laps of the race, although it did not affect his place in the final standings.

Mark Webber's race was defined not by a moment that mattered, but by an opportunity missed, much like Michael Schumacher. Both men were easily overtaken when their tyres had nothing left to give – the decision to pit was delayed until it was too late for either man to find any real advantage from their fresh rubber.

Lewis Hamilton overtook Webber for the lead on lap 50. On lap 45, Webber posted a 1:18.648s. By lap 47, his time had fallen to 1:19.820s. On lap 49, as the McLaren driver loomed large in his mirrors, the Australian's tyres were only capable of a 1:21.285s, over a second slower than the Brit behind.

If Webber had pitted around lap 43, when he was posting high 1:18s and low 1:19s, he would have rejoined the pack in P6 (presuming that there were no problems with the pitstop). Given that on fresh rubber the Red Bull driver's times returned to 1:18-1:19s while those ahead were lapping the same or slightly slower on tyres degrading lap by lap, Webber would have had nearly thirty laps to try and gain position. By pitting on lap 50, he dramatically reduced the possibility of gaining even a single position.

Further down the field, Schumacher faced similar difficulties. The German legend made his final stop on lap 33. By the end of the race, his tyres were so ragged that it was impossible to hold off the advancing Force Indias, who had far more grip and were able to be more aggressive approaching the few corners. All three cars are Mercedes-powered and feature variants on the F-duct, meaning neither should have had a real advantage on Circuit Gilles Villeneuve's many straights. Had he pitted around lap 49, when his times fell from the 1:19s to the 1:23s (in lap 56), Schumacher should have been able to finish in the points.

Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso both drove astounding races, on track and in the pitlane. Alonso won the battle of the pits, and led his former teammate back onto the circuit. Seven laps later, Hamilton overtook Alonso for the lead, a position he held until his second pitstop, which came just when it seemed that Ferrari would pass McLaren. The two had been battling for much of lap 26, putting paid to the notion that the F60 is uncompetitive. In Alonso's hands, the prancing horse was a threatening beast.

Hamilton also deserves accolades for his driving this weekend – a blistering lap for his third consecutive Montreal pole, neat overtaking manoeuvres, and skillful management of his tyres on F1's most challenging track. The win was truly merited, and hard fought.

The Canadian Grand Prix was a real classic, the kind of race that can be watched over and over. There was non-stop action across the grid, and the leaders lapped the cars behind up to P7, an impressive feat even on a relatively short circuit.
