

Valencia was a short weekend with a lot of travel. I had to work on Friday before flying out to Spain in the evening, so missed the morning's running.

F1 Valencia Blog: FP2 in transit

This is probably the oddest article I'll ever write. I am currently on a train from Oxford to Bristol, reading the BBC text updates as a means of keeping up with the news. But coverage I promised, and so coverage you will get, even if it does leave something to be desired.

Ferrari haven't been quiet about the upgrades they've brought to Valencia – the team did a mini test of their new low-slung exhaust (within the bounds of FIA regulations) at a Fiorano filming day last week, and promptly put video of the event up on YouTube. There is no subterfuge at the Scuderia.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner has already made mutterings about Ferrari's filming day being within the letter of the regulations but not the spirit. Given that the phrase 'spirit of the regulations' can be heard in the paddock more often than 'pass me that spanner, will you?', I think it's about time the FIA hired someone in a ghost suit to run through the garages, haunting the teams with the spirit of the regulations.

Bare minimum, that needs to happen in Korea and Brazil, the two races bookending Hallowe'en.

Anyway, back to the actual racing. Fernando Alonso was fastest this afternoon, and teammate Felipe Massa finished in P7. Massa might have done better had he not red flagged the session when his F60 beached itself across the track following a Turn 4 spin. It cost the Brazilian 30 minutes of the session, valuable data-harvesting time.

The Scuderia had long promised that Valencia would be the start of something big for the team – they've brought what is essentially a new car, and it seems to have done the trick. Of course, practice sessions aren't necessarily good indicators of race performance, but given that Alonso was challenging for the lead in Montreal, it's likely the car won't fall apart in 10 laps in Spain.

And that's the short and sweet article you're getting from me – my train's about to pull into Bristol Parkway, and I won't be able to use my laptop again for hours.

Lap times:

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.39.283s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.39.339s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.39.427s
4. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.39.650s
5. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.39.749s
6. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.39.880s
7. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.39.947s
8. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.40.020s
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.40.029s
10. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.40.174s
11. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.40.287s
12. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.40.387s
13. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.40.618s
14. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.40.906s
15. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.40.945s
16. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.41.115s
17. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.41.371s
18. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.41.457s
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.42.467s
20. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.42.993s
21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.43.811s
22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.43.854s
23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.44.095s
24. Karun Chandhok (HRT) 1.44.566s

F1 Valencia Blog – FP3 at the Port of Valencia

So here we are. Empty track to the left of me, heaving yachts to the right. It must be a Formula 1 free practice session.

I've always found it odd that teams spend so little time on track in the practice sessions. Given that the testing ban has already restricted data gathering sessions, you'd think that the engineers and drivers would want to use as much of the practice sessions as possible.

But it comes down to tyres. In this resource reduced era, teams are limited to the sets of tyres they're allowed over the course of the race weekend, which in itself limits the running time on track.

Some background to this morning's events: Renault, Mercedes, and Ferrari are now all running their own versions of Red Bull's low-slung exhaust. Red Bull will be using their F-duct in Sunday's race; the device has been seen in practice sessions but has never before made it through to the actual competition. Nico Rosberg was fastest in FP1, with Fernando Alonso fastest in FP2.

While it remains to be seen how both teams perform in the race, it looks as though the rumours surrounding both teams' poor rates of development can be put to bed for a few days at least.

Now that the session is approaching the half-way mark, times are beginning to appear on the boards. None of the fast cars have set times yet, meaning that laps are coming in around 1.40s, not the low 1.39s we saw yesterday afternoon.

Track conditions are better than they were on Friday, but by no means great. There are still problems with dust, but the racing line is rubbering in. Track temperature is currently 33 degrees, while air temperature is 25 degrees.

The grandstands are much emptier than I expected given the crowds I saw at Barcelona. At the Circuit de Catalunya, Friday's practice sessions were sparsely populated, but by FP3 on Saturday morning, the hordes were gathering in force. Here I estimate that one in every ten seats – if that – has been filled.

There are now times on the board from everyone except the two Ferraris and the two Red Bulls. But three of the four cars are out on track, and should be setting timed laps any second. As ever, now that everyone's on track it's impossible to keep track of the times as they change too quickly.

But there is no doubt that Ferrari and Red Bull both look to be very quick in Valencia this weekend – Fernando Alonso has been top of the leaderboard since his first timed lap, and Mark Webber and Sebastain Vettel are swapping P2 and P3 between them.

It is no surprise that Ferrari are quick here, especially given the host of upgrades the team had designed for the car. But the Valencia street circuit was not expected to suit the RB6 – not enough for P2 and P3 in back to back practice sessions, anyway.

Instead it is the two McLarens that appear to be floundering. Lewis Hamilton was briefly top of the charts when the track was fairly empty, but is now in P8, while teammate Jenson Button is languishing in P15. Given that McLaren seem to make a habit of low-fuel runs in practice sessions in order to grab the headlines, this is very out of character for the team. Qualifying is where they drop the ball, not FP3.

Robert Kubica is one to watch this weekend – he's probably the only driver who enjoys Valencia, he specialises in street circuits, and the changes to the Renault's exhaust had the BBC's Ted Kravitz in agonies of rapture during FP1 on Friday morning. The Pole is currently in P2, behind Alonso, and could be in a position to challenge for his second Valencia podium if he keeps it up in qualifying.

Adrian Sutil is also looking very fast around the streets of Valencia – the Force India driver is currently in P5 with a 1.38.826s, 0.313s slower than Alonso and two-tenths faster than Lewis Hamilton. In fact, Sutil's is currently the fastest Mercedes-powered car on the board.

With FP3 drawing to a close, everyone is out on track expect the Mercedes pair. Sebastian Vettel set a P1 worthy time (1.38.487s), but milliseconds later Webber grabbed the top spot with a 1.38.313s. Jenson Button managed a 1.38.769s, putting him faster than his teammate for the first time this weekend, while Robert Kubica claimed fastest time with a 1.38.154s.

Adrian Sutil has just gone faster than Fernando Alonso with a 1.38.500s, and there is less than a minute remaining. The garages are completely empty, and the track is heaving. The chequered flag has fallen, but there are times still to come in. Vettel went purple in the first sector, and has taken the top spot with a 1.38.052s.

Of course, looking up at the copy I wrote while the practice session was underway it now seems pretty laughable. Both Mercedes drivers seemed to be struggling, while Michael Schumacher has cemented his second-driver status with a P15 finish. And that's a sentence I never thought I'd type.

Rubens Barrichello and Tonio Liuzzi, both of whom had spent most of FP3 languishing in the low mid-field, pulled out eleventh-hour laps that were completely unexpected – the press room echoed with the sound of 'what? When did he pop up in the top 10?'

Lap times:

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.38.052s
2. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.38.154s
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.38.313s
4. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.38.500s
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.38.513s
6. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.38.623s
7. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.38.676s
8. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.38.686s
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.38.769s
10. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.38.816s
11. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.38.822s
12. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.39.050s

13. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.39.105s
 14. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.39.113s
 15. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.39.222s
 16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.39.392s
 17. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.39.527s
 18. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.39.699s
 19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.41.303s
 20. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.41.428s
 21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.41.955s
 22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.42.354s
 23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.42.611s
 24. Karun Chandhok (HRT) 1.42.622s
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F1 Valencia Blog – Q1 in the hot sun

F1 Valencia Blog – Q1 in the hot sun

Maybe it's not Bahrain hot, but it is still pretty toasty outside. Toasty enough that the lunch break was spent hovering up the contents of the media ice cream fridge. What do you mean I wasn't supposed to eat them all?

While I was busy eating ice cream, the grandstands have begun to fill up in earnest. But the smartest people in town are those hanging out on the balconies and rooftops surrounding the track. Excellent views, private flushing toilets, and free. Remind me again why Silverstone's not surrounded by high-rises?

Track temperature peaked at 44 degrees in the lunch break, and is now down to 43 degrees according to the live timing screens in the media centre, or 39 degrees according to Radio 5 Live's Twitter feed. I'm not sure which is right, so I'm splitting it down the middle and calling the track 41 degrees. Air temperature is 25 degrees, thanks to the sea breezes cooling us all down.

Unless one of the front running teams makes a major mistake, I think it's safe to say that McLaren, Red Bull, and Ferrari will see both cars in Q2. Mercedes are more of a gamble, thanks to Michael Schumacher's P15 this morning. Force India, Williams, and Renault were all strong this morning – the top twelve drivers were split by a second, making today's qualifying session incredibly tense.

The pitlane is now open, and we've got the first cars out on the track. All I can hear is the sound of engines peeling out of the pitlane, with the roar fading to a squeal as they begin to circumnavigate the track. Fabulous.

Timo Glock is running the option tyres in this session, while nearly everyone else has elected to start on the primes. Fernando Alonso posted his fastest FP3 time on the harder compound, and wasn't able to improve his time on the supersofts. Will we see the Spaniard gamble on hard tyres for his final qualifying stint?

Times are changing constantly; the only thing that hasn't changed is Fernando Alonso's place at the top of the leaderboards. Except that Vettel has just pinched the top spot, with a 1.38.324s.

Robert Kubica is purple in the second sector, green in the first, and currently the man best placed to dethrone Vettel. Which he does, on his first flying lap, with a 1.38.282s.

Michael Schumacher is definitely struggling today – he's currently in P14, with a 1.39.465s, less than half a second clear of the dropout zone. Not a safe place to be in the last five minutes of Q1, that much is certain.

Tonio Luizzi and Adrian Sutil are both in the top ten, with Liuzzi leading his teammate by a tenth. The past two races have been a real vindication of Force India's efforts – the team is now one of the stronger mid-field contenders, and could be in with a shot of winning races if only the bigger teams didn't lock out the first three or four rows of the grid.

Rubens Barrichello, who won the 2009 European Grand Prix for Brawn, is making the most of his affinity with the track; the Brazilian is currently in P5 with a 1.38.574s.

Michael Schumacher is now at serious risk of falling out in Q1. He is now in P18, having been pushed into the dropout zone by Pedro de la Rosa. The German driver is out on track and could squeeze in two more laps at a push, but the current lap isn't promising – he hasn't set personal best times in any sector. The chequered flag has now fallen, giving Schumacher one chance to make it into Q2. And he's through.

The press room is buzzing with the news that Schumacher has been struggling with a power steering problem, but there's not much more information available as I type.

Fastest man of the session was Robert Kubica with a 1.38.282s, and it was tight at the top of the boards. But Q1 is more about who didn't make it through than those who did.

Dropout zone:

18. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.39.343s
19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.40.658s
20. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.40.882s

21. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.42.086s
 22. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.42.140s
 23. Karun Chandhok (HRT) 1.42.600s
 24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.42.851s
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F1 Valencia Blog – Q2 is underway

Thanks to the heavy use in the past 20 minutes, track temperature has climbed back up to 45 degrees, while the air is staying at a constant 25 degrees. With only 15 minutes of Q2, the pitlane begins to empty as soon as it opens.

First man to post a time is Felipe Massa: he crosses the line in 1.38.591s. Massa is quickly shoved down the rankings by teammate Fernando Alonso and current P1 Lewis Hamilton. Unless a run of back luck hits, neither Ferrari nor McLaren should have any trouble getting through to Q3. The Red Bulls are also on the pace, with Mark Webber setting a P1 time of 1.38.041s.

The lap times here are tight beyond belief – they bring to mind those Incan monuments so well put together that you can't slide a razor blade into the gaps between the stones.

Michael Schumacher, who was having undisclosed car problems in Q1 – believed to be power-steering problems – is almost certain to go out in Q2. His lap times are improving, but he has yet to make a decisive run that would secure him a place in the top ten.

Both Williams drivers are running well, with Rubens Barrichello in P8 and Nico Hulkenberg in P9. But no one is running as well as the Red Bulls, who were not expected to find much pace in Valencia. Sebastian Vettel is currently leading the timesheets, with Mark Webber only 0.03s behind.

At present, the top ten is made up of five teams: Red Bull, Renault, Ferrari, McLaren, and Williams. We have around three minutes remaining, and everyone is out on track, trying to cement their place in Q3.

Felipe Massa was faster than Fernando Alonso, and finished Q2 behind the two Red Bulls in P3. Lewis Hamilton was faster than Jenson Button, whose time of 1.38.339s saw him beaten by former Brawn teammate Rubens Barrichello.

With only half a second separating the top ten, Q3 is going to be an edge of your seat nail-biter.

Dropout zone:

11. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.38.586s
 12. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.38.627s
 13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.38.851s
 14. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.38.884s
 15. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.39.234s
 16. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.39.264s
 17. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.39.458s
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F1 Valencia Blog – the closest Q3 ever

And with the unmistakable sound of engines firing up beneath my feet, Q3 has begun.

This is going to be one of the tightest qualifying sessions of the season. At the end of Q2, the top ten drivers were split by less than half a second, and the lack of overtaking opportunities in Valencia mean that position is paramount.

Vitaly Petrov is the first man to set a time, followed in short order by Jenson Button. Button's time 1.38.314s was good enough to see off Fernando Alonso, but was immediately beaten by Lewis Hamilton, who was in turn beaten by Mark Webber.

Webber is favourite for pole this weekend, but there are five long minutes remaining. It's a lifetime in Formula 1, and anything could happen.

Nico Hulkenberg has just popped up in P5, ahead of the two Ferraris. But with Alonso and Felipe Massa both out on track, and Massa going green in the first sector, that is likely to change.

Drivers are now piling out of the pits for their final runs, most of them using the option tyre for this last set of flying laps. Fernando Alonso finds enough pace for P4, and has enough time to squeeze a final lap in should he need to.

Vettel goes fastest with a 1.37.587s, but teammate Webber is currently on a flying lap, as is current P3 Hamilton. Neither man is able to best Vettel's time, meaning that the 2010 European Grand Prix is the site of Red Bull's third front row lock-out of the season.

Bizarrely, both Williams drivers posted a best time of 1.38.428s. The best the car is capable of at this track?

Provisional grid:

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.37.587s

2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.37.662s
 3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.37.969s
 4. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.38.075s
 5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.38.127s
 6. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.38.137s
 7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.38.210s
 8. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.38.428s
 9. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.38.428s
 10. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.38.523s
 11. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.38.586s
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 24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.42.851s
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F1 Valencia Blog – Problems in qualifying

Just about the only team not to have suffered some form of problem or disappointment in this afternoon's qualifying session was Red Bull. The team were expected to be okay around the Valencia track, but not great. As it was, the team locked out the front row for tomorrow's race.

But pretty much everyone else in the paddock failed to live up to their own or others' expectations, for a host of reasons.

Valencia was supposed to be the scene of Ferrari's great comeback, the race at which the long-promised upgrades would see the team win their first race since Bahrain. And the Scuderia haven't done badly. Fernando Alonso will be lining up alongside Lewis Hamilton on the second row of the grid, while Felipe Massa will be in P5. It's a good result, but not the one the team were hoping for.

'A step in the right direction, but with a hint of regret,' reads Ferrari's post-qualifying press release. Team principal Stefano Domenicali said of the afternoon: "We are reasonably pleased with this result. The car proved to be competitive and everything was in place to secure an even better result but, for various reasons, we never managed to put together the perfect lap with either of our two drivers."

All is not lost for Ferrari fans – with Alonso and Massa in P4 and P5, the race could come down to tyre management. The F10 seems to be one of the best at walking the fine line between tyre-wear and tyre-warming, and that could prove to be more of an advantage here in Valencia than it has at many of this season's races. While tyre strategy is not going to be as vital here as it was in Montreal, drivers who can manage their options for longer could make up positions and build leads while their rivals pit, shaking things up somewhat.

The most common problem experienced by the teams seems to have been the option tyres. Force India's press release reads "a switch to the option tyres did not however produce the anticipated improvement in pace". Timo Glock said "we thought things would work out with the option tyre with a small set-up change, but I had one run on primes and they were definitely much quicker." Jaime Alguersuari said that he "struggled especially on the soft tyres", while Renault's Eric Boullier said "we didn't find the performance we expected with the soft tyres".

McLaren have had mixed fortunes so far this weekend – the team expected to play the damage limitation game, but Lewis Hamilton managed to qualify third on the grid despite a slide on his final lap. Jenson Button was not so lucky – the Somerset driver made a minor error of his own, locking up in the last corner and running wide, but his error was punished with a loss of two-tenths and P7 on the grid.

But the day was not a complete write-off for the current world champion – he was fastest through the speed trap, setting a benchmark time of 312.9kph. His teammate's best effort was 309.8kph.

The biggest surprise came in the form of Mercedes and Williams, who appear to have traded places for the weekend. Both Williams drivers made it through to Q3, with Nico Hulkenberg qualifying in P8 and his teammate in P9. Neither Mercedes driver reached the final qualifying session: Michael Schumacher will start from P15, while Nico Rosberg is ahead in P12.

Schumacher spent the session struggling with his car. Speaking to Spanish television, the seven-time world champion explained: "Basically, there were two factors," Schumacher told television crews in Spain. "One was that we had a general issue with the tyres just not working, as in Canada. On top of this, I had a so-called difficulty with the brakes - I was locking up the front right basically permanently, seemed to be unloaded at the front right corner. I don't understand that - something we need to get on top of, so that made it extra difficult when we already had a barrier to climb over."

But what do these qualifying issues mean for tomorrow's race? Good question. If this were a track known for overtaking, I would be optimistic about a thrilling race ahead. The relative ability of each driver to warm up and then manage his rubber could lead to overtaking and challenges as tyre performance varies across the grid. But as Mark Webber said in the post-qualifying press conference, "it's a race where in the past people have struggled to stay awake".

From P16 to P24, there aren't many surprises. The new teams and two Sauber drivers are accustomed to starting from the back of the grid, and are highly unlikely to challenge the frontrunners except as obstacles to be lapped. But it is with the presence of ostensibly fast cars in the mid-field that tomorrow begins to look a bit more interesting.

I don't know what to expect from Schumacher or Nico Rosberg tomorrow; with the cars in parc ferme conditions we will not see any technical wizardry without consequent grid drops. The team might decide to hedge their bets by preserving the status quo, and given that the paddock was emptying when I walked through it half an hour ago, that seems to be the most likely option. Both Schumacher and Rosberg will have to make the most of poor qualifying positions and hope they can get better tyre performance – and improved car control – in tomorrow's race.

Tonio Liuzzi and Adrian Sutil were running well until qualifying, and both drivers finished FP3 in the top 8. There was a point in this morning's practice session where Sutil was the fastest Mercedes-powered driver on the grid. Poor timing put paid to that during qualifying, but both cars do have the pace to improve in the race. Their main problem is the traffic surrounding them; the midfield is a dangerous place to be.

As for the top ten, I am expecting carnage. Not crashes and flying bits of carbon fibre, but the hungry start of ten men fairly evenly matched for speed and all well aware that overtaking is a near impossibility at this circuit. Expect to see some risky attempted overtaking in the early stages as drivers try to build up that vital pre-pitstop lead.

F1 Valencia Blog – The race is on

Thanks to my tight turnaround this afternoon – I have to leave the circuit the minute the race finishes – I thought I'd do a reprise of the live Skype chat as the race occurred, with analysis to follow while I'm in transit.

I have to get to Valencia station by 5pm at the latest, and even that will see me cutting it fine for my flight from Barcelona. Next season, I'm going to do all of this by private jet, even if that means I have to be a stowaway.

It's currently 1.30 in Valencia, and the pitlane has opened. Cars are heading out to the grid, and UK viewers will no doubt see Martin Brundle bump into that female TV journalist at any moment. With half an hour to go before the race begins, track temperature is 44 degrees, and air temperature 26 degrees.

[13:03:35] Kate Walker: Talk in the press room is that any off the top 4 could do it. One vote for Hamilton, one for Vettel, two for Webber. No one's picked Alonso, but all reckon he could do it.

[13:04:19] [redacted]: so jensons not gonna win then

[13:04:32] Kate Walker: Schu's on prime tyres, the top ten all on softs.

[13:04:51] ... Jenson could do it if there's a SC and he takes advantage, but P7's not promising.

[13:05:16] ... Tyre strategies will be good to watch – some think it will vary, others are calling one-stoppers.

[13:05:22] [redacted]: coming on to the grid

[13:05:38] Kate Walker: Nearly time...

[13:05:48] [redacted]: ready

[13:05:57] Kate Walker: Did Kobs nearly spin heading onto the grid? Not a good sign...

[13:06:05] [redacted]: steady

[13:06:09] Kate Walker: LIGHTS ARE OUT!

[13:06:11] [redacted]: go

[13:06:28] Kate Walker: Turn 1 is carnage

[13:06:34] [redacted]: go lewis go

[13:06:39] Kate Walker: Ham running well, Alo just behind

[13:06:42] ... Where is Webber?

[13:06:47] [redacted]: not sure

[13:06:58] ... yellow I think

[13:07:05] Kate Walker: He's not in the top 10...

[13:07:31] [redacted]: what the hell happened

[13:07:51] Kate Walker: He's down with Bue somewhere

[13:08:10] ... Watching them stream past the window now

[13:08:15] [redacted]: 9th place

[13:08:36] Kate Walker: Crazy

[13:08:46] ... So I got my call wrong, then.

[13:08:56] [redacted]: trulli lost a nose

[13:09:06] Kate Walker: Ah, that's why he's pitted already.

[13:09:12] [redacted]: yup

[13:09:46] Kate Walker: Bar got ahead of Hul, too.

[13:10:20] [redacted]: I know

[13:10:26] Kate Walker: DLR overtakes Alg. Didn't think that could happen here.

[13:10:26] [redacted]: so not exciting eh

[13:10:46] Kate Walker: We've got 50-some laps to go – anything could happen.

[13:10:52] ... But looking good so far.

[13:11:01] [redacted]: ok exciting so far

[13:11:08] Kate Walker: Ham purple in first sector.

[13:11:16] ... Vet is running ahead of the field.

[13:11:29] ... Ham and Alo squeezed Web back when they passed in T1.

[13:11:43] ... Not sure how he got as far back as the Williams, though...

[13:11:59] ... Ham nearly had the lead going into T1.

[13:12:12] ... Reckon he can claim it w/o reliability issues from RBR?

[13:12:58] ... Ham Vet touched on T1, wheel to wheel. Any sign of handling/tyres problems?

[13:13:23] [redacted]: I think it broke a bit of hamiltons wing

[13:13:48] Kate Walker: Alo now purple in sector 1

[13:13:55] ... And now it's Vet purple in sl.

[13:14:01] [redacted]: it did break a bit of hamiltons wing

[13:14:22] Kate Walker: He's running well for someone with a broken wing.

[13:14:53] [redacted]: trulli out. was hit from behind possible stuck in gear

[13:15:08] ... not sure by who

[13:15:14] Kate Walker: Thought so. Great new start, poor guy.

[13:16:04] ... RBR's tweet: We're wishing Seb all the very best for the next couple of hours. After that, he's on his own...

[13:16:21] ... Alo purple in s2.

[13:16:38] [redacted]: hahaha

[13:16:57] Kate Walker: Why is But 2s slower than Kub? He doesn't have car trouble.

[13:17:35] ... Tru back on track.

[13:17:42] [redacted]: trullis back out

[13:17:50] ... I think they fixed it

[13:17:50] Kate Walker: Snap!

[13:18:11] ... Alo really likes s2, goes purple there every lap.

[13:18:20] ... RBR are better in s3.

[13:18:35] ... Web pits.

[13:18:57] ... Back in P18.

[13:18:58] [redacted]: not sure what's happening with button

[13:19:19] ... couldn't get webbers front nearside tyre on

[13:19:21] Kate Walker: More grip issues, probably - he struggled with that here last year.

[13:19:26] ... But, that is.

[13:19:30] [redacted]: that's why stop was so slow

[13:19:59] Kate Walker: How many broken mirrors, black cats, and ladders did Web walk past on his way to the circuit this morning?

[13:20:16] ... Vet purple, then Alo purple immediately.

[13:20:33] ... Ham-Vet gap 3.7s, Alo 1.5s behind Ham.

[13:20:36] ... Britney in the pits.

[13:20:44] ... Ros back in P19.

[13:21:41] ... Web massive smash.

[13:21:46] ... On Trulli.

[13:21:49] ... SC now.

[13:21:54] ... Is Web okay?

[13:21:59] [redacted]: went over trulli

[13:22:02] Kate Walker: No, on Heikki.

[13:22:09] ... Web OK.

[13:22:14] ... Climbs out of the car.

[13:22:20] [redacted]: think so he's out of car

[13:22:26] Kate Walker: Carnage in the pits now,

[13:22:35] [redacted]: I can see

[13:23:09] Kate Walker: Web/Kov smash v similar to the GP2 carnage with Kral this morning.

[13:23:29] ... But less dramatic, if you can believe it.

[13:23:59] ... Looks like Kov slowed down, launching Web.

[13:24:09] ... Vet, Ham in pits. Alo leads.

[13:24:19] ... Nope, Alo pits.

[13:24:26] [redacted]: that was a proper smash

[13:24:32] ... most people in pits

[13:24:35] Kate Walker: Schuey's in P3. For now.

[13:24:43] [redacted]: for now

[13:25:06] ... hamilton now has new front wing

[13:25:12] Kate Walker: Tweet of the day: For the second race in a row, Schumacher realises he left his driving glasses in his jacket.

[13:26:09] ... Schu pits.

[13:26:40] [redacted]: the incar cam was awesome

[13:26:54] Kate Walker: Schu had 23s lead over Kobs, but is dropping down the grid like nobody's business.

[13:27:04] ... This is sheer chaos.

[13:27:08] ... Who is where?

[13:27:18] ... Even the press room is flustered, can't keep lap charts.

[13:27:29] [redacted]: it was like ground sky ground, ooo more sky smash

[13:27:45] Kate Walker: Live timings can't keep up with all the chaos.

[13:28:04] [redacted]: just trying to work it out hang on

[13:28:36] Kate Walker: Web in-car footage looked like when we went zorbing.

[13:28:52] [redacted]: exactly

[13:29:16] Kate Walker: Kobs running in P3.

[13:29:26] [redacted]: kov is out

[13:29:34] Kate Walker: But up to P4, less than a second behind Kob.

[13:29:53] ... Will we have a repeat of Brazil 09? I hope so!

[13:30:34] ... Want the SC to come in so I can see some racing!

[13:30:53] [redacted]: kov to pit radio. kov said I think he ran into me

[13:31:08] Kate Walker: Kov slowed down way before the corner, wasn't Web's fault at all.

[13:32:12] [redacted]: I mean, really - he ran into you? you don't say.

[13:32:17] Kate Walker: How many times is Schuey going to pit under the SC?

[13:32:21] ... SC in this lap.

[13:32:30] [redacted]: schu in pit again

[13:32:37] Kate Walker: Schuey now done all his compounds.

[13:32:39] [redacted]: not sure

[13:32:49] Kate Walker: Might have trouble passing Alg again.

[13:33:03] ... Need a TR to hold the Merc at bay!

[13:33:22] ... Lotus blaming Webber for the accident, say he missed the braking point.

[13:33:31] ... Press room says Kov broke way too early.

[13:34:22] ... Vet nearly lost it defending the SC restart.

[13:34:46] [redacted]: vettel locked it

[13:35:17] Kate Walker: The order is pure chaos now.

[13:35:26] ... Processional? No, for a first!

[13:35:40] ... Thank god for 2010. Proper action, even in Valencia! Sort of.

[13:36:04] ... Order now Vet, Ham, Kob, But, Bar, Kub, Bue, Sut, Alo.

[13:36:31] ... Massa very far back, but overtook two cars in the last lap.

[13:37:05] [redacted]: said it would be exciting

[13:37:12] Kate Walker: Will Kob be the Trulli train of Valencia 2010?

[13:37:37] ... But won't want to risk an overtake given the amount of swaying Kobs does in the braking zones.

[13:38:08] ... At least, not until he knows he can do it cleanly.

[13:38:12] [redacted]: I know

[13:38:28] Kate Walker: Building up a good lead for Ham though. :)

[13:38:35] [redacted]: kob is a bit of an unknown force

[13:38:55] Kate Walker: He started on primes, so should be able to hold the others off well into the lap 30s.

[13:39:02] [redacted]: wish kob would bugger off

[13:39:07] Kate Walker: Unless he makes a rookie error, of course.

[13:39:24] [redacted]: button needs to pressure him

[13:39:33] Kate Walker: Ham went purple.

[13:39:33] [redacted]: force an error

[13:39:49] ... coz kob can be like a rolling road block

[13:39:54] Kate Walker: But can't do that from too close or he might get caught in the carnage - Kobs tends to take people with him.

[13:41:13] ... Best to wait behind until he pits and then manage the tyres till the end for a safe P3.

[13:41:17] [redacted]: maybe we could aim him at vettel or schu

[13:41:53] Kate Walker: But Schumacher's too far behind - at this rate Kobs will lap him before he pits.

[13:42:03] ... Vet now purple.

[13:42:37] ... So much for Ferrari's big day, huh? Don't think the Scuderia planned for this kind of chaos.

[13:43:06] ... But holding a steady 1.2s gap to Kobs.

[13:43:18] ... Safe, patient, just what we expect from the Somerset lad.

[13:43:47] ... Alo looks to have serious understeer.

[13:43:59] ... Did you see any prangs that could have affected his handling?

[13:44:10] [redacted]: slow and steady wins the race

[13:44:30] Kate Walker: Probably won't win this race. But should be okay for a podium though.

[13:44:31] [redacted]: the tortoise and hare taught us that

[13:45:01] Kate Walker: Kobayashi in P3 means an end to racing in Valencia. Discuss.

[13:45:10] ... (Topic of conversation in the press room.)

[13:45:32] ... Ham under steward investigation.

[13:45:34] ... Any idea why?

[13:45:36] [redacted]: locked it coming into a corner

[13:45:59] Kate Walker: He's under investigation for that?

[13:46:02] ... Why?

[13:46:03] [redacted]: something to do with safety csr

[13:46:15] Kate Walker: Let me know when you know.

[13:47:01] [redacted]: right. think wires got crossed there

[13:47:15] Kate Walker: You were answering my Alo question?

[13:47:45] [redacted]: lewis is under investigation coz of something to do with the SC

[13:47:52] ... instigated by alonso

[13:48:05] ... not sure what yet

[13:48:12] Kate Walker: Backing up traffic.

[13:48:42] ... The race leader was Vet, so if Ham gets punished, Vet should too.

[13:49:05] ... Alo's just whining because he messed up coming into the pits with Mas and is now down in P9.

[13:51:35] ... But is now playing it too safe, I think. Not every race will come to you.

[13:51:55] ... Ham penalty - drivethrough - for overtaking the safety car.

[13:51:57] ... WTF?

[13:54:02] ... Doesn't look like he overtook - is this Spa all over again? He was past before the SC had finished leaving the pits, and then slowed down to let him through.

[13:54:11] ... And what advantage could he have gained?

[13:52:41] [redacted]: lewis drive through for overtaking safety car

[13:54:49] Kate Walker: Ham answers his penalty with a purple.

[13:55:22] [redacted]: no he was behind it at the second safety car line

[13:55:34] Kate Walker: Ham has l4s advantage on Kobs, but a drivethrough won't see him back in P2.

[13:55:53] ... On the replay it looked like Ham was in front, and then slowed to let the SC past.

[13:56:00] [redacted]: glass bottle in middle of track
[13:56:13] Kate Walker: Spanish fans cheered when Ham penalty announced.
[13:56:19] [redacted]: not sure how it got there
[13:56:35] Kate Walker: Ham back in P2.
[13:56:38] ... SWEET.
[13:56:54] [redacted]: yay
[13:56:56] Kate Walker: Bet Alo is fuming back in P9.
[13:57:10] [redacted]: yup
[13:59:46] Kate Walker: Turns out Kobs little train saved Ham's day.
[14:00:01] ... Think Ham will buy him a thank you gift?
[14:00:10] ... That Marshall was ballsy getting the bottle!
[14:00:34] [redacted]: he should get a medal for that run
[14:00:55] Kate Walker: Maybe we should get Usain Bolt as a marshal when he retires from athletics.
[14:02:01] [redacted]: maybe
[14:02:05] Kate Walker: Turns out that bottle was plastic, not glass.
[14:02:23] [redacted]: I know
[14:02:26] ... I saw
[14:02:34] ... looked glass
[14:03:00] Kate Walker: It did.
[14:03:44] ... Either way, what sort of idiot throws stuff onto an F1 track?
[14:04:38] ... No fan of motorsport should do anything that potentially dangerous. Shows they don't get risk to drivers at all.
[14:05:28] ... Seems to have gone a bit quiet now. Less going on in the middle sector.
[14:06:12] ... And when was the last overtake?
[14:08:48] ... One of the pitlane grandstands has begun to empty.
[14:08:55] ... Alonso fans heading home already.
[14:10:07] ... Ham is narrowing gap on Vet. Not by much, but l3s now down to l19s.
[14:10:16] ... Kobs still yet to pit.
[14:10:25] ... Ham goes purple.
[14:10:50] ... Gap now l12s.
[14:11:06] ... Will England lose this race on penalties? (Hamilton's, that is?)
[14:11:58] ... Ham being seriously slowed by HRTs.
[14:12:03] ... Is this a Spanish conspiracy?
[14:12:19] ... Schu pits.
[14:12:29] ... I am not predicting a points finish for the German legend.
[14:12:39] ... Really sticking my neck out there.
[14:13:15] ... Kobs is lapping backmarkers. That's a first for Sauber this year!
[14:13:51] ... Glock just wobbled into the run-off area heading for the pits. Not a great day to be a Virgin.
[14:14:15] ... Sen has a dangly nose, ooerr. Looks to be dragging on the track.
[14:14:55] ... Vet/Ham gap now up to l3s, thanks to backmarker traffic.
[14:15:54] ... Sen pits for a new nose at last.
[14:16:01] ... SCHU JUST WENT PURPLE!
[14:16:13] ... Where the hell did that come from?
[14:16:34] ... Sut and Buemi nearly launched each other, but Sut got past.
[14:16:38] ... Yay, an overtake!
[14:16:59] ... Ham now purple in sl..
[14:18:13] ... Is that 23 laps without an overtake?
[14:18:27] ... Smoke coming out of the back of Bar.
[14:18:35] ... Deffo a Williams, anyway. Hulk?
[14:19:35] [redacted]: apparently rosbergs brakes are critical
[14:20:25] Kate Walker: They've been dodgy for ages, I'm not surprised he's having problems now.
[14:20:40] [redacted]: how is kob still going
[14:20:45] Kate Walker: Hardly going to cost Ros a finish in the points.
[14:20:54] [redacted]: he's got to stop soon
[14:21:08] Kate Walker: God only knows. But he will stop in the next few laps, he has to.
[14:22:28] [redacted]: he'll end up out of the points then
[14:22:29] Kate Walker: Not many laps to go now; wonder when Kobs will come in.
[14:22:37] ... DIG hasn't pitted yet either, has he?
[14:23:00] [redacted]: haha dig
[14:23:25] Kate Walker: Is But ever going to make a move on Kobs?
[14:23:38] [redacted]: dig in pits
[14:23:54] Kate Walker: Everyone now under investigation after the race!
[14:24:05] [redacted]: what?
[14:24:31] ... that's crazy
[14:24:34] Kate Walker: Cars 1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 22
[14:24:41] [redacted]: speeding on SC out lap
[14:24:43] Kate Walker: All investigated for SC lap delta, or something.
[14:25:33] ... Basically it's everyone in front of Alo except Ham.
[14:25:34] [redacted]: didn't keep to the lap time on the safety car in lap
[14:25:42] ... and vet
[14:26:04] Kate Walker: But, Bar, Hul, Kub, Pet, Sut, Liu, Bue, Dir.
[14:26:38] ... Depending on the penalties, this could promote Schu to the points.
[14:26:59] [redacted]: hope not

[14:27:03] Kate Walker: There's enough time for drive-throughs now - why investigate post-race?

[14:28:06] ... So what do you think of the race?

[14:28:14] ... Press room verdict = pants.

[14:28:41] [redacted]: well

[14:28:57] ... it was more interesting than I thought it would be

[14:29:11] Kate Walker: No one's going to finish in the order they actually finished, thanks to penalties, and other than Web/Kov early on, very little has happened.

[14:29:22] [redacted]: it depends

[14:29:30] Kate Walker: Hate races that are decided after the chequered flag has fallen.

[14:29:53] [redacted]: it will either be a time penalty or a grid drop for the next race apparently

[14:30:10] Kate Walker: And time penalties screw up the race.

[14:30:44] ... Or we ruin Silverstone before it's even started.

[14:30:46] ... Joy.

[14:30:49] [redacted]: would take ages to work it out if they give them all penalties

[14:32:04] Kate Walker: This is frustrating beyond belief.

[14:32:36] ... Ham is closing on Vet. Not really enough time left to close the gap and overtake, sigh.

[14:34:05] ... When is Kobs going to stop? Or is he going to run the risk of a grid drop at the next race, lol?

[14:34:58] [redacted]: not sure maybe he'll just keep going even when everyone else stops

[14:35:17] Kate Walker: lol

[14:35:17] [redacted]: hulk is out

[14:35:21] Kate Walker: Hulk out.

[14:35:26] ... Snap!

[14:35:41] ... That puts DLR in the points.

[14:37:09] [redacted]: hulk had a delaminated rear and serious sidepod damage

[14:37:27] Kate Walker: So, is anything going to happen before the chequered flag?

[14:37:39] ... Hulk's retirement notwithstanding, natch.

[14:38:08] [redacted]: they're trying to get kob out in front of alonso

[14:39:03] Kate Walker: The theory here is that Kob's pit stop will be on final lap, his garage is before the finish line.

[14:39:22] ... If Kobs pits, But will pass, but he can cross the finish line in the pit lane on his second tyres.

[14:39:37] ... Sounds very legally dodgy, but definitely possible.

[14:39:50] ... And Kobs pits, putting paid to that cunning plan.

[14:40:08] ... But up to the podium.

[14:40:22] ... Tortoise hasn't won, but patience has paid off.

[14:40:34] ... Kobs back in behind Alo.

[14:40:41] ... One point, having spent the race in P3.

[14:40:41] [redacted]: just behind alonso

[14:40:44] Kate Walker: Oops.

[14:40:50] [redacted]: shame

[14:41:30] Kate Walker: Schu goes a pointless purple.

[14:41:47] [redacted]: just like his comeback

[14:41:56] Kate Walker: lol

[14:42:05] ... Button wakes up at last, goes purple.

[14:42:12] [redacted]: yay jenson fastest lap

[14:43:21] Kate Walker: So close to the finish now.

[14:44:08] ... Alo, Kobs, and Bue are looking feisty.

[14:44:43] [redacted]: i know bue locked his tyres coming in to last corner

[14:45:17] Kate Walker: GO KOBAYASHI!!!

[14:45:21] [redacted]: go kobayashi

[14:45:31] Kate Walker: I wonder what Alonso's going to report him to the stewards for...

[14:45:46] ... Good for Kobs - that was the move of the race, no question.

[14:45:49] [redacted]: overtaking on a corner

[14:46:04] Kate Walker: Ham has cut the Vet gap down to 3.8s.

[14:46:49] ... Yay, it's over.

[14:46:53] [redacted]: vet ham but

[14:46:58] Kate Walker: So, that was a thriller.

[14:47:19] ... Kobs took Bue before the line!

[14:47:26] [redacted]: kobayashi in 7th

[14:47:29] Kate Walker: Without Kobs this would have been dull as.

[14:47:55] ... Not much point recounting the leaderboard, as it will all change after the race.

[14:48:51] ... And I'll be on a train, and in no position to find out the results. Doh.
