

The Hungarian Grand Prix weekend fell as I was packing up to move countries while finishing off my day job before doing Fl full time. As a result, coverage was pretty minimal...

Fl Sofa Blog – FP3 at the Hungaroring

For the umpteenth time this season, Red Bull Racing look to be in the best position to secure pole for Sunday's race. The team have an unerring ability to squeeze endless tenths out of a car already acknowledged as the fastest on the grid, and Hungary's practice sessions have been no exception.

While Red Bull have been faster than the competition all season long, at the Hungaroring they have been around a second ahead of the pack, an even bigger gap than usual. Without the recent developments from Scuderia Ferrari, the Milton Keynes racers would have a comfortable margin of nearly 1.5s over their competitors.

Anything can happen in Formula 1, and it is entirely possible that another team will secure pole this afternoon. Possible, but not likely.

Ferrari driver Fernando Alonso was the only man able to get close to Red Bull's times, but even he was 1.2s slower than Mark Webber, who set a fastest lap of 1.19.574s. Webber had been trading fastest times with his teammate for much of the morning session before setting a final blistering lap on supersofts that Sebastian Vettel was unable to match. Vettel's final runs were beset with traffic, and the young German was unable to make the most of his option tyres.

The final practice session started slowly, as overnight rain had stripped the track of much of its rubber. The green surface and oil between turns two and three saw drivers proceed with caution at first, with most drivers completing installation laps at slower speeds while establishing the lay of the land.

Surprise performance of the morning belonged to Renault's Vitaly Petrov, who finished the session in P7, but whose best runs on the prime tyre saw him in P3 before times began to tumble on the options. Both Renault drivers finished FP3 in the top ten, with Robert Kubica in P4 with a 1.21.066s. Petrov ran off track twice in FP3, but was still comfortably within the top ten, good news for this afternoon's qualifying session. The gap between the young Russian and Brit Lewis Hamilton was 0.02s.

Felipe Massa struggled with rear grip in the first half of the morning session, and was lapping much slower than teammate Alonso. But Ferrari called the Brazilian into the pits for a rear wing change and a modified suspension set up, and Massa dropped straight into P5, above Hamilton.

Hamilton had mixed fortunes this morning. FP3 was the young Brit's best 2010 Hungary session thus far, and he beat teammate Jenson Button, but the MP4-25 cannot match the Ferraris or Red Bulls for pace. Kubica was three-tenths faster in the R30, a testament to the Renault's mechanical grip, but bad news for Lewis. McLaren are unlikely to challenge for the first two rows this weekend, and sustained performance from Kubica could put P5 out of reach.

FP3 times (unofficial)

1. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.19.574s
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.20.058s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.20.724s
4. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.21.066s
5. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.21.264s
6. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.21.376s
7. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.21.399s
8. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.21.422s
9. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.21.473s
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.21.513s
11. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.21.705s
12. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.21.939s
13. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.22.151s
14. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.22.337s
15. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.22.427s
16. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.22.508s
17. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.22.918s
18. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.23.708s
19. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.24.547s
20. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.24.576s
21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.24.623s
22. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.24.805s

- 23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.26.479s
 - 24. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.27.176s
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F1 Sofa Blog – Q1 at the Hungaroring

The question on everyone's lips is can Red Bull be beaten to pole? Mark Webber ended the morning practice session 1.2s ahead of Fernando Alonso in P3, an almost unheard of advantage. There is always the possibility that Ferrari were sandbagging, but no team has been able to touch the Red Bulls all weekend.

With Q1 underway, track temperature is 41 degrees. Vitaly Petrov is first man on track for Renault, and sets a 1.23.386s. Teammate Robert Kubica is second to cross the line, a second slower than the young Russian. But Petrov is quickly displaced as the track begins to fill.

Lewis Hamilton quickly improves on his morning performance, and briefly occupies P2. But the British driver is displaced by Rubens Barrichello, and then times really start collapsing.

Half-way through the session, Jaime Alguersuari is in the dropout zone with the six drivers from the new teams. The Hungarian Grand Prix marks the one-year anniversary of the young Spaniard's F1 debut, and both he and Toro Rosso will be aiming for Q2.

But a run on the option tyres sees Alguersuari move up to P8 with a 1.21.978s, pushing Force India's Adrian Sutil into the dropout zone. Sebastian Buemi, Michael Schumacher, and Tonio Liuzzi are all theoretically at risk of dropping out in Q1, although all are out on track for the final minutes of the session.

Sutil goes up to P11, putting Schumacher into P17. Buemi posted a lap worthy of P12, pushing Schumacher into P18 and Jenson Button in P17, at the edge of the dropout zone. Schumacher is on a flying lap with the option of one more, while Button is setting a personal best on track. Schumacher crosses the line in twelfth, while Button goes P7.

Kamui Kobayashi goes out in Q1, joining Timo Glock, Heikki Kovalainen, Jarno Trulli, Lucas di Grassi, Bruno Senna, and Sakon Yamamoto.

Dropout zone

- 18. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.22.222s
 - 19. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.24.050s
 - 20. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.24.120s
 - 21. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.24.199s
 - 22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.25.118s
 - 23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.26.391s
 - 24. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.26.453s
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F1 Sofa Blog – Q2 at the Hungaroring

Qualifying position is vital in Hungary, and the midfield here is split by only a few tenths. With Jenson Button temporarily at risk of dropping out in the last session, Q2 at the Hungaroring could claim a surprise high profile scalp or two.

Going into the session the Red Bulls, Ferraris, and Renaults appear to be strong. Felipe Massa is the first man on track, and sets a benchmark time of 1.21.417s. Fernando Alonso immediately beats his teammate's time by four-tenths.

Lewis Hamilton's first lap was a 1.26.069s, dangerously off the pace. The Red Bulls both cross the line in P1, with Sebastian Vettel setting a 1.19.866s to pip his teammate to the top of the boards.

Hamilton improves with a 1.21.221s, good enough for P5, while teammate Button is in P8, two seconds off Vettel's pace. Five minutes in to the session, the dropout zone contains Rubens Barrichello, Adrian Sutil, Tonio Liuzzi, Jaime Alguersuari, Sebastian Buemi, Nico Rosberg, and Michael Schumacher.

The two Renaults are in P4 and P5, just behind Fernando Alonso in P3. The two Red Bulls still head the pack, as they have all weekend. Times are changing so quickly that few seem safe.

With three minutes to go, cars are exiting the pits for their final runs. Nico Hulkenberg, who was pushed in to P11 by teammate Barrichello, pushed too hard on his hot lap on the soft tyres and missed his best chance to secure a place in Q3. The young German has one more chance to fight it out on track with his teammate, currently in P10.

As the chequered flag falls, Hulkenberg pushes in to P9 as de la Rosa moves into P10, pushing Jenson Button into P11. Button's final lap isn't fast enough for P10, and the current world champion drops out of the Hungarian Grand Prix in Q2.

Mark Webber is fastest for Red Bull, with Sebastian Vettel in P2, Fernando Alonso in P3, Vitaly Petrov in P4, Nico Rosberg in P5, Felipe Massa in P6, Robert Kubica in P7, Lewis Hamilton in P8, Pedro de la Rosa in P9, and Nico Hulkenberg in P10.

Dropout zone

- 11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.21.292s

12. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.21.331s
 13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.21.517s
 14. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.21.630s
 15. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.21.897s
 16. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.21.927s
 17. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.21.998s
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F1 Sofa Blog – Q3 at the Hungaroring

The two Ferraris are first on track as the final qualifying session of the Hungarian Grand Prix gets underway. Alonso has been faster than his teammate all weekend, but the Red Bulls have remained out of reach.

First to cross the line, Alonso sets a benchmark time of 1.19.987s. Massa crosses the line half a second slower than his teammate, a margin representative of the Ferrari drivers' relative pace this weekend.

Lewis Hamilton's first lap puts the McLaren driver in P3, but neither Red Bull driver has set a time. Mark Webber's first timed lap is 1.19.184s, and that despite a few tenths lost running wide. Sebastian Vettel's first timed lap looks a lot tidier, and the young German crosses the line in 1.18.773, nearly half a second ahead of his teammate and miles ahead of Alonso in P3.

With only two minutes remaining of the session, Pedro de la Rosa, Robert Kubica, and Vitaly Petrov have yet to set timed laps. At best, each man will have two attempts for position on Sunday, at a track with limited overtaking opportunities.

De la Rosa's first lap puts him in P7, ahead of Nico Hulkenberg. Petrov immediately shunts Hulkenberg down into P9, and positions change across the board as the chequered flag falls and final times are posted.

Sebastian Vettel crosses the line in 1.18.832s, securing pole position. Mark Webber is safe in P2, while on the row behind Alonso in P3 is just ahead of teammate Massa. Lewis Hamilton does a 1.20.499s, good enough for P5, while alongside him in P6 is Nico Rosberg. Vitaly Petrov in P7 outqualifies teammate Kubica in P8; it is the first time this season that the Russian rookie has outqualified the Pole. Pedro de la Rosa ended the session in P9, while Nico Hulkenberg completes the top ten.

Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.18.773s
 2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.19.184s
 3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.19.987s
 4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.20.331s
 5. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.20.499s
 6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.21.082s
 7. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.21.229s
 8. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.21.328s
 9. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.21.411s
 10. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.21.710s
 11. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.21.292s
 12. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.21.331s
 13. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.21.517s
 14. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.21.630s
 15. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.21.897s
 16. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.21.927s
 17. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.21.998s
 18. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.22.222s
 19. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.24.050s
 20. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.24.120s
 21. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.24.199s
 22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.25.118s
 23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.26.391s
 24. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.26.453s
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F1 Sofa Blog – The post-qualifying analysis

Should Red Bull even be allowed to take part in qualifying for the rest of the season? The FIA may as well give the front row to Christian Horner, while the other teams compete for P3 to P24. Horner can then flip a coin to determine which of his drivers will take P1, and the rest of the grid can fight it out for position.

The team's pole position statistics are now getting silly. Sebastian Vettel has scored twelve career poles, seven in 2010. Teammate Mark Webber has scored five career poles, four of them this year. As for the 2010 season, Lewis Hamilton is the only non Red Bull driver to have lined up at the head of the grid.

But all is not lost for Red Bull's competitors. Thanks to a combination of bad mechanical luck and fluffed starts, the Milton Keynes racers have not

been able to translate their poles into automatic wins.

And while the Hungaroring does not offer a host of overtaking opportunities, it does offer one of F1's best opportunities to lose the advantage of pole. The run down to Turn 1 is one of the longest on the calendar, something every driver lining up on Sunday's grid is well aware of. But it is braking for the tight right-hander, nearly a hairpin, that rewards the bravest drivers.

As the mass of cars converge on Turn 1 for the first time on Sunday afternoon, it will be a combination of outright balls and spatial awareness that will determine the order of the rest of the race. Bravery without awareness leads to crashes, and could bring out an early safety car. But for those drivers who manage to pull away from the pack, outbrake their competitors, and claim the racing line out of the corner, there is the chance to make up places lost in qualifying.

For while qualifying position is vital at the Hungaroring, so is a clean getaway. Sebastian Vettel is under pressure to get a decent start after fluffing his past two poles, while Fernando Alonso will be tightly coiled and aware that he cannot run the risk of springing too early, of jumping the start as he did in Shanghai. Both men also have their teammates to watch out for, men who have had better starts in recent races.

Mark Webber and Felipe Massa are both drivers with something to prove this season. Webber has been driving at the peak of his game, and 2010 marks the Australian driver's best career chance of a WDC. Every race in which he outperforms his teammate is a race that puts him one step closer to becoming Australia's first world champion since Alan Jones in 1980.

Massa has spent the year driving under two shadows – that of his accident, at the Hungaroring in 2009, and that of his new teammate, Fernando Alonso. Much of the Brazilian driver's early season was dogged with unfavourable comparisons, both with Alonso and with the driver Massa was before he nearly lost his life last summer. And after the scandal that the Hockenheim Grand Prix became last week, Massa will be even more determined to give the Scuderia a performance that resoundingly puts his teammate in the shade.

In P5, Lewis Hamilton will have a difficult afternoon. The MP4-25 simply cannot compete with the RB6 or F10 on outright pace, meaning the British driver's best chance this afternoon is to make a clean getaway at the start and keep his competitors behind him. But because teammate Jenson Button failed to make it out of Q2, it is a job Hamilton will have to perform on his own, unlike in Germany, where the two McLarens were able to work together to keep the Red Bull of Mark Webber firmly in their rear-view mirrors.

Nico Rosberg shares the third row with Hamilton, but the Mercedes driver is unlikely to be much of a threat on Sunday afternoon. Rosberg, Nico Hulkenberg, and Pedro de la Rosa didn't expect to make it into Q3 on Saturday, and began the session using old supersoft tyres. The three drivers will therefore be starting Sunday's race on the oldest, softest rubber on the grid. Expect very early pitstops from them as a result, unless there is a very early safety car.

Both Renault drivers are on row four, and barring any early errors should be in a strong position to score double points for the team in Hungary. The R30's high levels of mechanical grip are a boon around the twisting Hungaroring, and the two drivers can use their high starting position to pincer cars ahead in an attempt to gain places off the start. Nico Rosberg is a tempting possible target.

While Button may not have made it into Q3 this weekend, he is in the best position of the middle of the pack when it comes to the new rubber, clean side of the track advantage. Button's job should be made easier by the decaying rubber in the rows ahead, and if the Somerset driver is able to pull off another start similar to his Silverstone P14 to P8 leap, then all might not be lost.

Kamui Kobayashi went out with the new teams in Q1, and should be starting Sunday's race in P18. But because the Japanese driver failed to stop for weighing at the end of Q1, he has been docked five places and will start the Hungarian Grand Prix from P23, ahead of HRT's Sakon Yamamoto.

F1 Sofa Blog – The Hungarian Grand Prix

After a shocking weekend in Germany, Formula 1 fans were treated to a surprisingly busy race at the Hungaroring on Sunday afternoon. At a track which usually delivers processional races, an unexpected safety car led to an action-packed afternoon on track.

But the real chaos took place in the pits this afternoon. Renault released Robert Kubica into the path of Force India's Adrian Sutil, leading to the latter's immediate retirement. The Mercedes mechanics failed to secure Nico Rosberg's right rear wheel, which flew off the car and bounced into the Sauber mechanics before finally stopping in the Williams garage.

Kubica was given a stop-go penalty by the stewards for his part in the Sutil incident, while the Rosberg incident is being investigated post-race.

Race winner Mark Webber is undoubtedly hero of the afternoon, but special mention must also go to Nico Hulkenberg and Vitaly Petrov, both of whom had career-best finishes. The two rookies both outperformed their team mates; Kubica retired shortly after his collision with Sutil, while Rubens Barrichello finished the afternoon in P10, four places behind Hulkenberg.

Petrov had a dream weekend, qualifying in P7 and making up two places during the race. The young Russian got an excellent start, overtaking Lewis Hamilton going into Turn 2 on the first lap, although the Brit reclaimed the spot on the next lap. But Petrov was able to hold position behind the front runners until the safety car, setting the occasional purple in the first sector.

For the first fifteen laps, the Hungarian Grand Prix looked as though it would be another processional, with all the excitement over in the first two laps. Sebastian Vettel was pulling out a commanding lead over Fernando Alonso, while P3 Mark Webber was managing his race in dirty air, having been overtaken by the Spaniard at the start.

But when the safety car emerged, and the entire track piled into the pits, Mark Webber stayed out and took the lead. What could have been a risky last minute change of strategy for the Australian led to a commanding win, as Webber pulled out a 23.7s lead over P2 Fernando Alonso before pitting on

lap 43. The option tyres had seemingly limitless performance this weekend, and contributed to Webber's eventual win.

Lewis Hamilton was probably the unluckiest driver of the afternoon. During the reconnaissance lap the young Brit radioed his team to report a possible brake issue; McLaren got FIA permission to change his brake pads but decided to leave the car unaltered on the grid. But on lap 24 Hamilton pulled onto the grass at the exit of Turn 3, his afternoon over. The former champion felt his gearbox fail going into Turn 1 and lost rear drive.

McLaren teammate Jenson Button had a disappointing afternoon, although his eventual P8 finish was a vast improvement on his earlier prospects – he had dropped to P15 by the end of the first lap. Button managed to get up to P11 by changing his strategy and his rubber before the safety car pit stops, and was promoted to the points by his teammate's retirement.

Each driver had his own tale to tell this afternoon, but the real drama was in the ever-increasing gap between the Red Bulls and Fernando Alonso. Initial race leader Vettel showed off the RB6's pace from the first corner, with a 1.3s advantage by lap 2, and 2.5s by lap 3. By lap 4, the German was pulling ahead of the Spaniard by nearly a second a lap. Backmarker Sakon Yamamoto was first lapped by Vettel on lap 13, and finished the race four laps down. By the time Vettel pitted under the safety car, he had pulled out a 12s advantage over Alonso.

Once Webber was controlling the race, it was more of the same for the Scuderia. Alonso could hope for no better than a P2 finish, and even that was no certainty with Vettel hot on his heels.

Webber's first long run on the prime tyres was a masterclass in staying cool, reacting to circumstances, and winning with patience and style. The Australian made the most of the RB6's innate pace, first pulling out enough of a lead by his lap 43 pit stop that he was able to retain P1, and then taking advantage of the clear air to cross the line 17.8s seconds ahead of the Ferrari.

Webber's win was aided by a penalty for teammate Sebastian Vettel, who was found by the stewards to have created too great a gap under the safety car. Vettel's drive-through, which he served on lap 32, cost Red Bull a 1-2 finish. The young German spent the rest of the race fuming, before acknowledging afterwards that the error was his. Vettel tried hard to get ahead of Alonso, but was unable to make a move in the dirty air, despite his faster car.

The biggest story in the middle of the pack was a late battle between Michael Schumacher and Rubens Barrichello, fighting for P10. On lap 60, the Brazilian began preparing his move on his ex Ferrari team mate, but it was lap 62 before Barrichello first pounced. Schumacher fended him off, but Barrichello kept trying. On lap 66, the Williams driver made his move along the pit straight. Schumacher defended his place by pushing Barrichello into the pit wall, a move the stewards later deemed worthy of a ten-place grid drop at Spa.

At the back of the pack there were smiles aplenty, as all six cars from the new teams saw the chequered flag.

Race classification

1. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1h41.05.571s
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) +17.821s
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) +19.252s
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) +27.474s
5. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) +1.13.100s
6. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) +1.16.700s
7. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) +1 lap
8. Jenson Button (McLaren) +1 lap
9. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) +1 lap
10. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) +1 lap
11. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) +1 lap
12. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) +1 lap
13. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) +1 lap
14. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) +3 laps
15. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) +3 laps
16. Timo Glock (Virgin) +3 laps
17. Bruno Senna (HRT) +3 laps
18. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) +4 laps
19. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) +4 laps

Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) RET lap 25
Robert Kubica (Renault) RET lap 25
Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) RET lap 17
Adrian Sutil (Force India) RET lap 17
Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) RET lap 2

World Drivers' Championship

1. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 161 pts
2. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 157 pts
3. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 151 pts
4. Jenson Button (McLaren) 146 pts
5. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 141 pts
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 97 pts
7. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 94 pts
8. Robert Kubica (Renault) 89 pts

9. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 38 pts
10. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 35 pts
11. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 30 pts
12. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 17 pts
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 17 pts
14. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 12 pts
15. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 10 pts
16. Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) 7 pts
17. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 6 pts
18. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 3 pts
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 0 pts
20. Karun Chandhok (HRT) 0 pts
21. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 0 pts
22. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 0 pts
23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 0 pts
24. Timo Glock (Virgin) 0 pts
25. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 0 pts

World Constructors' Championship

1. Red Bull Racing 312 pts
 2. McLaren 304 pts
 3. Ferrari 238 pts
 4. Mercedes 132 pts
 5. Renault 106 pts
 6. Force India 47 pts
 7. Williams 40 pts
 8. Sauber 23 pts
 9. Toro Rosso 10 pts
 10. Lotus 0 pts
 11. HRT 0 pts
 12. Virgin 0 pts
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