
This race I elected to sit out, thanks to dwindling finances and concerns that the race might not happen. I couldn't afford to pay to fly to Korea only to be sent home again if the track was declared unsafe for racing...

Fl Sofa Blog – From the mouths of champions (Thursday press conference)

One of the five men who took part in the Thursday press conference in Yeongam will end this season as 2010 World Drivers' Champion. Mathematically speaking, the crown could be anyone's.

The Thursday press conference tends to be full of PR friendly statements, and Korea's was no different in that regard. For the hardened press room hacks, the best of the pre-race press conferences is Friday's opportunity to grill the team principals. But with a new circuit to learn, and a WDC crown now tantalisingly within reach, Thursday's media call was more interesting than usual.

Despite having won the WDC in both 2005 and 2006, a highlight in any driver's career, Ferrari's new hire Fernando Alonso asserted that – so far – 2010 has been his best season. When asked about his feelings going into the closing stages of the championship, the Asturian replied: "for me personally a great 2010 championship, driving for a new team, great integration with Ferrari from day one. Felt very comfortable. It has probably been the best year of my career so far with great experience, very happy."

Jenson Button is the only other championship contender to have moved teams for 2010, and much like Alonso he found that the settling in was easier than expected. The Frome flyer has the longest mathematical shot at the 2010 crown, as he currently sits 31 points adrift of championship leader Mark Webber, but the Brit asserts that anything is still possible.

"It is good to still be involved in the championship hunt with three races to go," Button said. "Obviously it's most difficult for me as I am 31 points behind. But there is always a possibility. We are still very hopeful and I am looking forward to the next three races."

Prior to the press conference, championship contenders Fernando Alonso, Jenson Button, Lewis Hamilton, Sebastian Vettel, and Mark Webber recreated the infamous 1986 Estoril shot of the four championship challengers – Nigel Mansell, Nelson Piquet, Alain Prost, and Ayrton Senna – sitting on the pit wall. It was an opportunity for the five to cement their place in Fl history, to affirm their roles in one of the most exciting seasons in living memory.

For five drivers who grew up watching Formula 1, worshipping the likes of Senna and Prost from behind the wheels of their go-karts, it was confirmation of their status of modern Fl heroes, the inspiration for champions of the future. Not that any of the five were gauche enough to admit it...

The Korean Grand Prix has had a lot of negative press of late, thanks to the seemingly endless delays to the FIA's approval of the circuit. The will-they-won't-they debate that has been the build-up to this weekend's race has meant that a lot of journalists – myself included – could not afford to pay for travel to a race that might not happen. Hence the return of the Fl Sofa Blog.

But despite complaints of overflowing loos, sporadic internet in the media centre, and disappearing media shuttles to and from the circuit, the drivers have nothing but good words for the circuit and the efforts made by the race organisers to ensure that everything happens according to plan.

Button repeated the widespread concern about the relative slipperiness of the racing surface, but was otherwise positive about Yeongam. "It is an interesting layout," he said. "I think they have done a good job with the layout of the circuit. I think in the first sector there are overtaking opportunities which is good to see and then you have some very fast flowing corners out the back. I think the layout is nice. It looks very slippery at the moment but that is inevitable considering it is quite a new asphalt."

Lewis Hamilton was rather more succinct: "I think they [the race hosts] deserve a pat on their backs for getting this place ready and it looks like they can put on quite a good show, so looking forward to it."

Sebastian Vettel was impressed with the work done thus far, but acknowledged that the drivers' experience was markedly different to that of the media and team staff. "[W]alking the circuit this morning it looks very interesting and lots of grandstands, so hopefully we will have lots of people coming this weekend," he said. "The circuit itself, I think the main things have been covered. We will see how grippy it will be, but given the fact there was a lot of concern and we were even talking about not racing here, lately they did a very good job. I think most of the things are finished, so should be alright for us to go out."

"The only thing that they could probably finish in the future is the hotel situation for a lot of team members and I think you journalists," the Red Bull driver continued. "I think for the drivers, we are fine, but I have heard some stories and maybe they can work on that."

The undoubted highlight of the press conference – despite Button teasing Webber about endless shrimp-filled barbecues back home in Australia – was the Red Bull pair teasing the assembled media about the cause of their qualifying pace.

"We have adjustable front ride height suspension which has been running since the start of the year and that works well and then we put the car back up for Sunday," Webber said. Vettel backed up his teammate's assertions: "As Mark said we have this big lever for the ride height. I think that is the secret for Saturday."

Whatever the real secret behind the RB6's pace, there is no guarantee that the team's run of speed will continue in Korea. After all, a new circuit is an unknown quantity, and despite time spent in the simulator prior to the race, the track surface and its effect on grip could make life difficult for everyone. The local geography means the track is currently dusty, and everyone in the paddock fears that the rising oils in the fresh tarmac could make for a slippery surface come Friday practice, as Mark Webber explained.

"It's a new venue, clearly, so we obviously have good simulation tools to understand what we expect to a certain point, but the big unknown is obviously what sort of grip level the track will give to us in the cockpit and how the tyres will work," said the Australian.

"We'll have a look at that tomorrow and then use a lot of that, obviously, for Friday going into Saturday. Everybody's in the same boat, I think we're all imagining that the track won't be incredible in terms of grip but it might be a surprise if we have some grip to play with, so let's see how tomorrow goes. I think for everyone it's the same boat, it's not that difficult with what we face."

There is also the remote possibility that the overly fresh tarmac might not stand up to the pounding that comes from 24 high downforce machines taking their turns on the course.

F1 Sofa Blog – Changes to the Yeongam Circuit

Congratulations are due to the organisers of the Korean Grand Prix. Despite obvious problems with the slippery and dusty track surface, and the cranes and service vehicles still dotted about the circuit, drivers' first impressions have been overwhelmingly positive.

The only fly in Korea's ointment – for the track surface will only get better as the weekend progresses, and the current slippery state makes for more interesting racing – is the news that the drivers are concerned about two points: a potentially dangerous bump on Turn 16, and the quasi-blind pit entry.

Sebastian Vettel was one of the first to comment on the potential dangers of the pit entry. "I think the pit entry is quite on the edge because it is blind, you cannot see if someone goes in and they have to go slower than someone who stays out," he said. "Especially if you are behind someone trying to pass and he chooses to pit it could be difficult."

Nico Rosberg agreed that it was potentially dangerous, but said that drivers could take precautions to minimise the risk. "The pit entry definitely is a concern, but what you have to do is to act as if it was a street circuit in that area," he said, "and if someone is going slower then you need a well-positioned marshal who gives double waved yellow [flags] or something like that because it is really blind and you need good information about what is going on in there. If that is in place then it is not a problem because it is just like a street circuit, but I am not sure it was in place out there at the moment."

One of the most concerned drivers appears to be 2009 world champion Jenson Button. "I'm worried," he said. "If the driver in front of you lifts to come in it's going to be very tricky to react fast enough."

Ferrari driver Felipe Massa was concerned about both the pit entry and Turn 16. "For sure the entry to the pits is a bit strange," he said. "Because you are the middle of a high speed corner and you need to stay inside, so sometimes it's not easy to see if the guy in front is going into the pits or not, We also have to look at the kerbs on the inside of Turn 16, there is a big bottoming out of the car there and that's dangerous."

Massa was not alone in critiquing Turn 16 – championship leader Mark Webber had a hairy moment there in second practice, and HRT driver Sakon Yamamoto red-flagged the session when he spun his car on the bump and stalled his engine mid-spin.

But the most vocal critic of Turn 16 was Massa's Ferrari teammate Fernando Alonso. "It's the worst corner," he said. "The grading of the asphalt is not at a good angle. You arrive on the flat track and it goes uphill just on the inside of the corner and you hit very hard with the chassis there."

Both the pit entry and Turn 16 were the subject of hot debate at the drivers' meeting, and the FIA were not slow to respond to the criticisms. The kerbs at Turn 16 are lower than the racing asphalt, so race director Charlie Whiting has added to the list of construction tasks at the circuit by requesting that the race organisers build up the kerbs, removing the risk of cars bottoming out over the bump.

No official decision has yet been made concerning the pit entry, but it is rumoured that the FIA are considering temporarily relaxing the rule that requires drivers to respect the white pit line on entry. It is thought that by changing the line of approach into the pits, the risk of accidents will be significantly reduced.

F1 Sofa Blog – F1 in South Korea

Well, at least the racing surface held up. There's not really much to be gleaned from the first practice session at a brand new track. With no frame of reference, it's hard to know which cars are really the fastest round the circuit, and which drivers are ballsy enough to throw it all at a few quick laps, outriving their cars and the competition.

As the pitlane filled up on Friday morning – stupid o'clock European time – the track temperature in Yeongam was 24 degrees, pretty standard for F1. Despite early morning mists in Korea, by the time the pitlane opened the sun had burned through the clouds, showing off Hermann Tilke's latest baby to its best advantage.

While most Friday morning sessions involve 45 minutes of endless installation laps, Jaime Alguersuari set the first timed lap at Yeongam a mere five minutes in to the session. Alguersuari's cautious 2.20.611s is only a record breaker by virtue of it being the first, but the marker has been set, and it is a respectable first effort on a track that is slippery, dusty, greasy, and dirty. Sounds like a 1930's gangster.

No one expected F1 to be easy running. New tracks always have teething problems, and freshly laid tarmac tends to be greasy. But the surface was worse than expected, thanks to dust from the ongoing construction work. Once the track began to rubber in, conditions improved and times began to fall – even Sakon Yamamoto enjoyed a brief (early) spell at the top of the time sheets, and he's hardly F1's answer to Speedy Gonzalez.

Worst off in the morning session was Lotus driver Jarno Trulli, who suffered another round of problems with the car, this time his gearbox. Trulli's 11 laps saw him ten seconds adrift of the leaders, but lap times are largely irrelevant. What will hurt Trulli over the course of the weekend is the fact that his biggest rivals have had twice as many laps in which to learn the circuit characteristics.

That being said, Lucas di Grassi is in an even worse position as the teams break for lunch – his car was put through its paces by Virgin test driver Jermone D'Ambrosio.

Fastest man of the morning was McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton, whose 1.40.887s saw him over a second faster than his teammate, and nearly 1.5s ahead of championship leader Mark Webber. But with F1 a learning session only, comparisons with the competition are essentially pointless. It is interesting to note that both McLaren drivers set their fastest lap times using the new wing, and that Hamilton was a second faster, but as of yet there's no telling whether it's outright pace or sheer bravery that led to the advantage.

As the session drew to a close, Robert Kubica lapped within 0.081s of Hamilton's time, followed shortly by Nico Rosberg (1.41.152s) and Sebastian Vettel (1.41.371s). It is hardly surprising to see the top of the timesheets made up of Red Bulls, McLarens, Mercedes, and Kubica. The real surprise is in the absence of both Ferraris. At least, it would be if Ferrari weren't in the habit of using Friday mornings to do long development runs, leaving the pace setting for later on in the day.

Remarkably for a new track in poor racing condition, there were no major incidents. A few offs and spins, thanks to the lack of grip, but nothing worth writing home about. Good news all around.

F1 timings (unofficial)

1. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.40.887s
2. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.40.968s
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.41.152s
4. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.41.371s
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.41.940s
6. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.42.022s
7. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.42.202s
8. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.42.293s
9. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.42.678s
10. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.42.883s
11. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.42.896s
12. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.43.054s
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.43.309s
14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.43.602s
15. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.43.928s
16. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.43.940s
17. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.44.887s
18. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.45.141s
19. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.45.588s
20. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.46.613s
21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.47.115s
22. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.50.347s
23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.50.821s
24. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.51.701s

F1 Sofa Blog – FP2 in South Korea

Now that's more like it. As the freshly laid Korean track began to rubber in, the falling times and leaderboard positions became more representative of the stats and figures we know and love. A Red Bull on top, followed by the McLarens, Ferraris, and Robert Kubica. The status quo has been restored.

As the drivers gained in confidence around the brand-spankingly new Yeongam circuit, they began to take more risks. And with risks come incidents, not least for HRT driver Sakon Yamamoto, who red-flagged the session when he stalled his car on Turn 16, bringing the HRT to a post-spin stop just where the track gets narrow and surrounded by concrete walls. Oops.

The other major incident of the afternoon – although not one that brought running to a halt – was the overheating of Jenson Button's McLaren. The 2009 world champion was trying out a range of engine profiles when he hit on one that's definitely been crossed off the list for the rest of the weekend. The McLaren pit fills with smoke and men with fire extinguishers trying to put out the overheating exhaust.

But there are a host of other minor incidents to keep fans on the edge of their seats. Robert Kubica nearly loses control of his car in the final two

corners of a flying lap, but remarkably manages to hold it together and crosses the line in a single piece. Seconds earlier, Mark Webber span coming out of Turn 12, kissing goodbye to what would have been a very good lap time.

Each of the five championship contenders enjoyed a brief spell at the top of the timesheets this afternoon, but the fastest man when the chequered flag fell was Red Bull's Mark Webber, whose 1.37.942s is currently the Yeongam lap record.

Sebastian Vettel had a fairly unsatisfactory afternoon – his first flying lap on the option tyres was compromised by the Lotus of Jarno Trulli. Vettel had to take a brief foray off track to avoid Trulli, and the trip was accompanied by the now familiar hand gestures and finger pointing from the young German. And with good reason – Vettel's best lap was 1.3s slower than his teammates, and he ended the afternoon in P7, behind his competition for the crown, plus Kubica and Felipe Massa.

As expected, Ferrari were much faster this afternoon than they were in the morning, with Fernando Alonso in P2, roughly two-tenths slower than Webber, and Massa in P6, nine-tenths off the leader's pace.

Lewis Hamilton was in P3 as the chequered flag fell, three-tenths shy of Webber's best lap. McLaren's stated aim for the weekend was to close the Red Bull qualifying gap, and as long as the Milton Keynes outfit weren't sandbagging today, they appear to have done so. Jenson Button was half a second slower than his teammate, and could well have been faster had he not lost running time thanks to the aforementioned overheating exhaust.

Despite the ever-improving track conditions and falling lap times, there were still complaints of handling problems up and down the pitlane. Massa said that his car was nearly undriveable in the final corners, and it is that section of track that appears to have caused the most problems.

FP2 timings (unofficial)

1. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.37.942s
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.38.132s
3. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.38.279s
4. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.38.718s
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.38.726s
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.38.820s
7. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.39.204s
8. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.39.267s
9. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.39.268s
10. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.39.564s
11. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.39.588s
12. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.39.598s
13. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.39.812s
14. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.39.881s
15. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.39.971s
16. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.40.478s
17. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.40.578s
18. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.40.896s
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.42.773s
20. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.42.801s
21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.43.115s
22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.44.039s
23. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.45.166s
24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.46.649s

F1 Sofa Blog – Odds and ends from Korea

All's quiet in Yeongam. The drivers are firmly ensconced in their hotels, resting up for FP3 and qualifying on Saturday, while the press corps will be out gallivanting, making the most of Mokpo's apres race highlights. But before the paddock emptied for the evening, a few minor news stories emerged.

- HRT have been fined \$5,000 for the unsafe release of Sakon Yamamoto. The Japanese driver was sent out from the garage with a tyre warmer still attached to his car, violating a number of FIA regulations. One of the relevant regulations, Article 23.1, reads: "It is the responsibility of the competitor to release his car after a pitstop only when it is safe to do so." The tyre warmer flew off the HRT while it was still in the pitlane, and one of Yamamoto's mechanics was sent to retrieve it.
- Mark Webber will be using his eighth and final engine of the season this weekend in Korea. Red Bull mechanics swapped out the old power unit after Friday's practice sessions, and the championship leader will begin FP3 with the new engine. Because Webber has only just hit his allotment of eight engines, the Australian driver is not at risk of a penalty resulting from the swap.
- Ferrari driver Fernando Alonso has already used his eighth engine, and team principal Stefano Domenicali today admitted that the team have some concerns about the possible impact earlier engine failures could have on the Spaniard's championship campaign. Asked at Friday's team principals press conference whether Alonso was likely to need a ninth unit before the season ends in Abu Dhabi, Domenicali replied: "I really hope not. If that happens then it will be tremendously difficult to fight to the end. What we have been able to do is manage the mileage with existing engines, and this is our plan. Hopefully we will manage up to the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. If we have any reliability issues it will be really

traumatic as it would be almost impossible then to recover the points we would need if we want to continue to fight with Red Bull and McLaren," the Ferrari team principal continued. "We cannot really have any problems otherwise it is finished." But Scuderia Ferrari are experienced at managing championship campaigns, and the team has already determined how best to make use of Alonso's remaining resources. "It is a matter of how much mileage you can do on an engine," Domenicali said. "This is the only thing. We have extended the use of it, but we need to be careful not to overheat anything, that in terms of temperature we are not aggressive. This is something we need to make sure above all for the hot races that we will have after Korea."

- Because the season is now drawing to an end, rumours of driver movements have gone haywire. According to some online resources, pretty much the entire paddock is changing places. But it is easy to read too much into the desire to get added website hits. Despite recent stories that have focussed on Williams dropping up and coming young driver Nico Hulkenberg in favour of a pay driver – most cited is Pastor Maldonado – all indications are that the Grove based team will stick with their current line-up at least till the end of 2011. Hulkenberg has been a good complement to elder statesman Rubens Barrichello this season, often matching and sometimes beating the experienced Brazilian, and Williams' stated intention is to allow their rookie to glean as much expertise as possible from his veteran teammate.

F1 Sofa Blog – FP3 in South Korea

Note to self: do not stay up all night drinking wine and then attempt to translate French F1 coverage into English. You're not that bilingual.

Turns out watching practice online is a lot harder without the BBC. Is there no way I can give them some sort of licence fee contribution to unlock the UK-only parts of their website? Or buy some sort of iPlayer access? I'm sure there are thousands of ex-pats around the world who would be happy to pay a subscription to access the Beeb's brilliant archives.

Rant over, it turns out that the final practice session of the Korean Grand Prix weekend provided a few shake-ups for the books. Sure, Robert Kubica has been like the ninja of 2010, occasionally and unexpectedly turning up on top, but when Renault spend most of their press releases bemoaning their lack of development cash, it's always a bit of a surprise to see the Pole outclass his richer opponents yet again. Could we be in for a surprise Renault pole this afternoon? That would be great to see.

There were a number of changes to the Yeongam track overnight, the first being that the much improved FP2 conditions appear to have degenerated in the cooler evening air, leaving the drivers slipping around a re-greased surface. Add in to that the construction changes that the FIA ordered to Turns 16 and 18, and the poor lambs have had to relearn a new track only 24 hours after learning the last one. But at least this version's safer.

The continuing construction work at Yeongam means that the track gets dustier by the day, leading to heavy tyre graining and an increased need for considered tyre management. This could play right into Jenson Button's hands, as long as he doesn't do his all too frequent trick of failing to get heat into the rubber. There's not much point preserving your tyres if you don't have the grip to actually do anything with them.

Problems with tyre graining reported after the traditional installation runs meant that the big boys – the title challengers we're all desperate to compare and contrast – held off on showing their hands until the session was half run. As usual, the Toro Rosso boys made the most of the relatively empty track, and were rewarded by nearly half an hour spent at the top of the standings.

It wouldn't last. Fernando Alonso was first to spoil their fun, setting a 1.40.795s on the harder compound. Then Jenson Button beat Alonso by a literal whisker, leading the Spaniard to retaliate with an improved time which was shortly bested by Lewis Hamilton. Hamilton managed to shave nearly a second off his rivals' times despite also shaving some rubber off his tyres with an exploration of Korea's off-track facilities.

With that, the gauntlet had been thrown down. Everyone piled back into the pits for final runs on the option tyre, and the track was as busy as Piccadilly Circus come rush hour. Traffic caused problems for nearly everyone on a flying lap; luckiest of the lot was Robert Kubica, who managed a relatively clear run as the chequered flag fluttered down, heading the sheets with a 1.37.354s, around 0.05s faster than Hamilton in P2.

Biggest surprise of the morning was Sebastian Vettel's P16, but don't read too much into that. Red Bull's magic wand is sure to see one or both of the drivers challenging for pole this afternoon.

FP3 timings (unofficial)

1. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.37.354s
2. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.37.402s
3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.37.426s
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.37.441s
5. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.37.629s
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.37.955s
7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.38.419s
8. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.38.501s
9. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.38.630s
10. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.38.632s
11. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.38.668s
12. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.38.733s
13. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.39.058s
14. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.39.145s
15. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.39.159s
16. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.39.780s
17. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.40.289s

18. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.41.591s
 19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.41.623s
 20. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.41.853s
 21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.42.095s
 22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.43.111s
 23. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.43.417s
 24. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.43.880s
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F1 Sofa Blog – Q1 at Yeongam Circuit

So here we go again. Will qualifying at a brand new circuit be enough to change the now expected Red Bull pole and new teams plus one of Tonio Liuzzi or a Toro Rosso at the back of the grid? Based on the practice sessions we've seen thus far, the back of the grid will be the usual certainty, but we could be in for a few surprises at the top end.

Other questions that must be answered: Why did I drink so much red wine while waiting for the session to start? Was my original intro to this piece really shrjncxz qawiehn? And will the round bacon I found be as satisfying in a sandwich as the streaky I normally eat? Updates on all of that to come.

And they're off! The pitlane is open for the inaugural qualifying session at Yeongam Circuit, and the race weekend can now begin in earnest. While the title contenders are usually the centre of attention, Q1 belongs to the new teams. It's pretty much a given that the six drivers from HRT, Virgin, and Lotus will make up the three back rows of the grid: the main question is who will join them and what order will they be in?

Jarno Trulli and Lucas di Grassi are theoretically disadvantaged by the reduced running they've had compared with their teammates. Trulli suffered yet more problems with his car on Friday morning, but at least there was a bit of variety at play – instead of the now traditional hydraulics failure, the Italian was instead sidelined by problems with his gearbox.

Di Grassi was denied the opportunity to explore Yeongam on Friday morning; Virgin instead handed his car to test driver Jerome D'Ambrosio. While giving reserve drivers a chance behind the wheel is usually a good thing, new circuits are different. Those men who are going to be racing to the flag on Sunday should be given the maximum possible time to learn the circuit, and D'Ambrosio's time behind the wheel of di Grassi's car has only added more fuel to the rumours that the Brazilian rookie will not be with Virgin next year.

And while I've been typing, Tonio Liuzzi and Adrian Sutil have been taking turns in the dreaded P18. Unless both Force India drivers manage impressive flyers in the closing seconds of Q1, it is almost certain that a Mercedes-powered car will be lining up at the back of the grid, just ahead of the Cosworths. There is a small chance that one of the Toro Rossos could be there instead, now that Sutil has assured his place in Q2, and Liuzzi's on a flyer.

But it was not to be – the Italian driver appears to be struggling with grip on his last chance run, and crosses the line still in P18. So no real surprises there. Instead, the big surprise comes at the top of the standings, where Lewis Hamilton has finished the session in P1. Could we see a McLaren on pole for the second time this season? Only time will tell...

Dropout zone

18. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.38.955s
 19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.40.521s
 20. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.40.748s
 21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.41.768s
 22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.42.325s
 23. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.42.444s
 24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.43.283s
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F1 Sofa Blog – Q2 at Yeongam Circuit

So Hamilton managed to top the timesheets in Q1. Can the young Brit keep his title hopes alive by repeating the feat in Q2? Or will that honour go – as usual – to one of the Red Bulls?

Jenson Button has been pretty unimpressive thus far, and looks likely to leave Korea out of the race for the title. Ferrari driver Fernando Alonso has the opportunity to cement his claim on the crown, engine supply willing, and Renault ninja/dark horse Robert Kubica could see a repeat of his FP3 success. It's all to play for here in Korea, and the alternately greasy and dusty track could shake up the grid for Sunday's race.

But it's not looking likely. With the first timed laps completed, the cars that we expect to be fast are, and the cars that we expect to be slightly slower – the Saubers, Toro Rossos, the remaining Force India, and the rookies – also live up to expectations. With every race this season, Virgin's idea that cars should line up in reverse qualifying order is looking more and more appealing. Just think of the overtaking opportunities that would abound – every race would have a thrilling run to the first round of pitstops, as Red Bull's qualifying speed would be truly tested in race conditions.

And with that not so brief diversion, Q2 is just about over. As predicted, Jenson Button is through to Q3 but not looking particularly fast. Michael Schumacher is still slower than Nico Rosberg, but appears to have come out of his dropping out in Q2 slump.

Most interesting is the relative pace of teammates. Now that Nick Heidfeld has joined him at Sauber, challenging the young Japanese rookie, Kamui

Kobayashi's marked improvement – especially concerning consistency – is now visible for all to see. The two Saubers ended Q2 split by about 0.06s, showing that the team didn't really have much more pace in the car.

Jaime Alguersuari has once again beaten more experienced teammate Sebastian Buemi, and the young Spaniard is rapidly cementing his place as Toro Rosso's lead driver, nearly seven-tenths faster than his Swiss teammate.

Worst off is Renault rookie Vitaly Petrov, whose perfectly respectable 1.37.799s would have been good enough for P15, were it not for his five-place grid penalty hanging over from Japan. Petrov will now start Sunday's race from P20, promoting Tonio Liuzzi to P17, and bumping the drivers between them up a spot.

Red Bull were the undoubted winners of the session, with a 1-2 led by Mark Webber.

Dropout zone

11. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.37.620s
12. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.37.643s
13. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.37.715s
14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.37.783s
15. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.37.799s*
16. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.37.853s
17. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.38.594s

* After Suzuka Petrov was issued with a five-place grid penalty, and so will start Sunday's race from P20.

F1 Sofa Blog – Q3 at Yeongam Circuit

This is it, people. Time to sort the men from the boys, to determine the final grid positions for Sunday's race. Theoretically, pole could be anyone's, but based on stats alone it's almost certain to go to one of the Red Bull drivers, with Fernando Alonso in with a remote chance of claiming the top spot.

And they're off. This final qualifying session is about so much more than the traditional run for pole. Thanks to the track conditions in Yeongam, the ability to line up on the clean side of tomorrow's grid is more important than it's been at nearly every race this season. Ferrari spent the morning practicing starts on both sides, and Felipe Massa found a real disadvantage in starting from one of the even-numbered positions. Sure, it's a boat that twelve of twenty-four men will be in, but P3 might be a better result than P2 for the men who fail to make pole.

This is turning into one of the most nail-biting qualifying sessions of 2010. Not only does the rapidly approaching end of the season add to the drama, meaning that all of the title contenders are going hell for leather out there, but the difficulty of managing tyres while staying on line means that even the most experienced drivers are prone to the minor errors that will go heavily punished thanks to the proximity of unforgiving concrete walls in the challenging final sector.

Fernando Alonso is the first man to break the 1.35s barrier in Korea, meaning that the Spaniard is in with a strong chance of retaining pole position for Sunday's race. Where his rivals are still in the low 1.36s, the Ferrari driver appeared to set a lap record without breaking a sweat. Can anyone else respond to the challenge laid down by the Asturian?

Lewis Hamilton and Jenson Button both have moments of drama: the McLaren pair know that a poor result in Korea means an end to their chances of this year's drivers' crown, and both are pushing hard for a good grid position. The long straights in the early part of the lap mean that neither man need to claim pole to be able to challenge in the race, but pole position does tend to make life a little bit easier come Sunday afternoon.

And as the session draws to a close, the excitement factor is dialled up to 11. Alonso's earlier 1.35.766s looked like a safe pole position until both Red Bulls crossed the line with faster times after the chequered flag had fallen. Vettel was the first to unseat Alonso, with a mind-blowing 1.35.585s. Seconds later, Mark Webber pushed the Ferrari driver down into P3 with a 1.35.659s. The RB6's single-lap qualifying pace never fails to impress, and the pair make it look effortless.

Best of the rest is Hamilton, whose 1.36.062s is good enough for P4, but the Brit will start tomorrow's race from the dirty side of the grid, putting him at a minor disadvantage. Nico Rosberg will line up in P5, thanks to an impressive 1.36.535s, and alongside the young German will be the Ferrari of Felipe Massa. Button's grip woes continued into the third session, and the current world champion will start in P7, meaning that his only real shot at a podium finish will come from tyre management and bang-on strategic calls from the McLaren team on the pit wall.

Robert Kubica was another man to struggle with grip and handling; the Pole's impressive FP3 performance turned out not to be the overture to a front row start in Korea, and the Renault driver will line up alongside Button in P8. Closing out the top ten are Michael Schumacher and Rubens Barrichello: the former Ferrari teammates are currently in a snit with one another over complaints of Schuey blocking Rubens' flying lap in Q2. Mercedes claim the Brazilian was not really on a flying lap at the time, and the stewards appear to be semi on-side – Schumacher was issued with a reprimand for his offence, but no penalty.

With an all-Red Bull front row, the team from Milton Keynes have done it again, scoring their umpteenth pole of the season. Alonso and Hamilton could both get ahead on the straights, but the RB6's impressive downforce and cornering speeds will pay dividends on the rest of the circuit.

Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.35.585s
2. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1.35.659s

3. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.35.766s
4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.36.062s
5. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.36.535s
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.36.571s
7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.36.731s
8. Robert Kubica (Renault) 1.36.824s
9. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.36.950s
10. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.36.998s
11. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1.37.620s
12. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.37.643s
13. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 1.37.715s
14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.37.783s
15. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.37.853s
16. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.38.594s
17. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 1.38.955s
18. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.40.521s
19. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.40.748s
20. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.37.799s*
21. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.41.768s
22. Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) 1.42.325s
23. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 1.42.444s
24. Bruno Senna (HRT) 1.43.283s

* Petrov qualified in P15, but was issued a five-place grid drop after the Japanese Grand Prix.

F1 Sofa Blog – The Korean Grand Prix as it happened

It's like Suzuka all over again.

The rain is falling at Yeongam Circuit, and the FIA have taken the decision to delay the start of the Korean Grand Prix by ten minutes, giving the rain a chance to calm down. When the race does start, it will be behind the Safety Car. Good news for any driver accustomed to fluffing their starts, but bad news for the Korean fans who have been denied their first chance to see a proper Grand Prix start.

Unlike the Japanese Grand Prix, Yeongam is pretty drama-free off the line. Drivers are instantly on the radio to their teams, complaining that the circuit is more like a swimming pool than a racetrack. Let's hope they brought along their water-wings. Or some super-wet tyres, at least.

According to the weather radar, the rain is supposed to stop in about twenty minutes, and the racing can then begin in earnest. Based on current lap speeds, that means the Safety Car should come in around lap 10.

And on the third lap, the red flags come out. Like the drivers, I can't see enough of the track to work out whether or not anyone's fallen off-course, but according to FOM's fabulous live timing app, everyone's still lapping as normal. As normal as you can be behind the safety car, anyway. Must be something to do with the torrents of rain flooding the track, and the somewhat perilous conditions at play.

Lap 4, and the drivers line back up on the grid in the original start order. Pit crews flood the track, and we're in for a restart at some point. How long are the FIA prepared to wait? Based on the typhoons that delayed the circuit's construction, we could be waiting till Christmas...

According to the radar, the current intensity of rain won't abate for forty minutes. Odds of this race finishing in time are slimmer than Kate Moss in profile. We're almost certainly looking at half points now, which is good news for Mark Webber, but could signal the end of the McLaren pair's championship chances.

And while we're waiting, a brief aside. Watching the race on French television is beyond bizarre. Jacques Lafitte does the commentary, and he's very good at it. That's the upside. The downside is the seemingly endless adverts. Not only do they break during the action (not that we've seen much of that yet), but a well-known international brand of razors have banner adverts along the top and bottom of the screen in between ad breaks. The one thing they've gained from that is the loss of me as a customer. I want to see racing, not razors with 64 blades and a vibrate function.

Despite the FIA announcing that the race will soon restart behind the Safety Car, Robert Kubica has sought shelter inside the Renault garage, leaving his car on the grid. Kubica's action begins a mini exodus, as few of the drivers seem confident that the race will start at all. Up and down the grid the cars are now draped in funereal shrouds, and the only dry men are sitting in the Safety Car.

And race control have now said that the rain is easing. Fair enough. But have the track conditions improved enough to make racing possible? It's not looking likely right now. In deepest, darkest rural France we're discussing the options. Darkness will fall on the circuit in about two hours' time, so if the race doesn't start soon it might not happen at all. There's a remote chance that action could be delayed until Monday, but that will lead to a lot of cancelled flight bookings amongst press and team personnel.

Marshals are now out in force, sweeping the track clear of water. Also on track is one of those road-sweeping machines that most of us associate with councils cleaning the pavements, but it's doing an admirable job of drying out the track. What they really need is out-sized hairdryers.

Tonio Liuzzi has just been told over the radio that Force India do not expect the race to go full distance, thanks to the approaching sunset. But at least they're expecting it to start at some point.

Apparently the delay we're currently experiencing will not count towards the two-hour time limit given to the race. So say race control, anyway. That's all good and well, but even Bernie Ecclestone can't stop the sun from setting. Or can he?

Finally, some news! The race will restart at 4.05pm Korean time. That's about ten minutes' time. Race control have confirmed that full wets must be used – surprise, surprise – and that the Safety Car will do more than one lap before coming in. So the fans present will not see a proper grand prix start at any point this weekend, which is a shame. Of course, it would be a bigger shame to see drivers injured or worse by starting the race in dangerous conditions.

But the real concern is that this damp squib of a race will put off Korean fans in the future. After all, it's one thing to sit in the rain to watch the British Grand Prix – fans know what they're in for when they buy the tickets. But in a country with no grassroots motorsport, and at a race whose stands have been filled by people clutching free tickets, there's not much on offer today to tempt people back as paying customers next year.

Final race preparations – Mark II – are currently underway. Drivers are returning to the grid, getting back into their soggy seats, and readying themselves for yet another low-key start behind the Safety Car. How many laps will they be able to complete before the light fails? It's anyone's guess, but the full race distance is highly unlikely.

Just about the only positive to come out of the wet start and restart is that no man has been hampered by starting on the dirty side of the track. And with the amount of standing water on the track, fears about tyre graining will not come to much – everyone's in the same boat (pardon the pun), and tyre management is more about staying on track than preserving rubber in the heat.

Based on the on-board footage, visibility is atrocious. Even behind the safety car we could see some prangs, as drivers choose different lines and degrees of slow speeds around Yeongam's many tight corners. Sakon Yamamoto goes off-track, but manages to hold it together enough to return to the parade of cars without hitting the barriers. His full wets will have picked up mud to add to the already treacherous conditions on track.

Seven laps in and the racing line is noticeably drier. The rest of the track would inspire Noah to get busy building an Ark, but there's a small chance that we'll see some action soon. A very small chance, based on the visibility out there. The drivers might as well be wearing blinkers.

Average lap times are one minute longer than those set in qualifying, and drivers are gingerly feeling their way around, trying to avoid the slippery kerbs. But not Lewis Hamilton, who is known to love the wet. 'It's good, it's good,' he cries over the radio, clearly itching to get on with the racing.

Of the four championship contenders, Hamilton is the man most likely to be able to turn the swimming pool to his advantage. The young Brit has delivered some of his most memorable performances in similar conditions, but he's also had some notable failures. Pole sitter Sebastian Vettel scored his first race win in the wet, but he's also had some memorable humiliations in this weather, not least during the 2008 Japanese Grand Prix, when the then Toro Rosso driver managed to take out both himself and current Red Bull teammate Mark Webber, earning widespread approbation.

Lap 11, and we've now spent twenty percent of the race behind the Safety Car. There's about 1h15m left of daylight, after which point visibility will degenerate even further. No sign yet of the Safety Car being recalled to the pits – according to the weather radar we're in for at least five more minutes of rain, and race control are unlikely to let the drivers loose on track until conditions have improved dramatically. Hamilton is champing at the bit, keen to show off those wet weather skills.

The only change to the start order thus far is Lucas di Grassi, whose earlier pitstop moved him from P22 to the back of the grid. It's all action in Korea, make no mistake. But with every minute that passes track conditions improve marginally, and we edge ever closer to the disappearance of the Safety Car.

Here in France it's yet another ad break. If the Safety Car gets called back into the pits while I'm watching fast food and razor commercials, I'm going to scream. UK viewers have no idea just how lucky they are. Not only is there the BBC's unparalleled race coverage, but as everyone will remember from the dark days of ITV, ads plus motorsport equals rage.

Thank goodness. Coverage restored, and the only thing I missed was di Grassi's second pitstop.

The team radios are a flutter with on-track chatter. Hamilton is keen to get on with the racing; the McLaren driver thinks conditions have improved enough to make the Safety Car nearly redundant. But his opponents aren't so sure, and some drivers have radioed their teams to say that the race should be called off, that it is too dangerous to race. The skies over Yeongam have definitely brightened, and on-board footage shows that visibility has improved dramatically.

And here we are on lap 17, and race control have announced that the Safety Car will be in this lap. At last! Racing at the Korean Grand Prix will get underway on lap 18. Ready, steady, GO!!!

Michael Schumacher takes Robert Kubica in sector one, but the big surprise is Nico Rosberg making a move on Lewis Hamilton and making it stick. The British driver was keen to show off his wet weather skills, but has lost a place already. Schumacher is working his way up through the field, and is prepping a move on Jenson Button. Is this the return of the former Rainmeister?

Replays show quite a few offs at the back of the grid – Tonio Liuzzi, Jarno Trulli, and Sakon Yamamoto all acquaint themselves with the run-off area.

And Mark Webber is off, probably out!

The championship leader is definitely out of the race, having spun the car on a wet kerb/astroturf combination. He took Rosberg with him, promoting Hamilton to P3. This will harm Webber's championship chances, although he's still in with a decent chance of taking the title. But Vettel is now likely to lead the WDC standings after Korea, presuming he manages to stay on track for the rest of the race.

The Safety Car is back out on track, only two laps after returning to the pits.

After a slow start, the Korean Grand Prix is getting very interesting indeed. If the race finishes in this order, Vettel will lead the championship, with Alonso in second and Mark Webber down in third. Hamilton's chances have marginally improved, but it will take at least another win for the Brit to claim the crown.

There are smiles aplenty at Lotus, HRT, and Virgin – Yamamoto's up eight places to P15, Heikki Kovalainen up seven to P14, and Glock up six to P13. The rain really does change play.

AUGH! Another ad break! And this time I really will miss something. And miss something I did – the Safety Car is now back in the pits, and we're approaching the mid-point of the race. No change to the order at the front – Vettel leads from Alonso, Hamilton, and Massa. But at the back of the grid, Bruno Senna and Jarno Trulli collide, stripping the Lotus' front wing and necessitating a return to the pits.

More rain is expected soon, meaning that the Safety Car will have spent more time leading this race than Vettel.

Caution is currently the name of the game at Yeongam. The drivers have learned from Webber and Rosberg's retirements, and other than Kamui Kobayashi, no one's trying to overtake the competition. Some points are better than no points, after all.

I spoke too soon. Schumacher has just taken Button, and the seven-time champion is keen to show off his recently rediscovered prowess in the wet. Next in his sights is the Ferrari of Felipe Massa, roughly three seconds up the road.

The Trulli-Senna prang is under investigation by the stewards, just as the Italian driver officially retires from the race. Next to go is di Grassi, whose race is ended by the barriers. At least he made it past the formation lap this time, but it won't help his chances of retaining a seat for 2011.

And Button's in the pits for a change to inters. This is the kind of tyre strategy that won the Australian Grand Prix for the Brit in similar conditions – will it be the right call today? Button rejoins the race in P16, but will move up the field as those in front begin to make their own tyre decisions.

Kovalainen and Sutil are both likely candidates for a change of rubber; the two men span at the same corner within seconds of each other. But both were able to rejoin the race, nothing damaged bar their pride. Full wets are definitely looking a bit too rugged for current track conditions, and Button may have made the right call at the right time.

More drivers are making the move to inters, with Williams driver Nico Hulkenberg next into the pits. The rookie driver pitted from P8, and looked sure to come out in P10, but he was passed on the pit exit by Renault rookie Vitaly Petrov.

And the Safety Car is back out, this time thanks to Sebastian Buemi. The Toro Rosso driver went straight on at a corner, into the side of Glock's Virgin, losing a wheel in the process.

Drivers pile into the pits for a change to inters under the Safety Car, and a mini race between Hamilton and Massa sees both men hold position. Hamilton's out in P3, with the Brazilian just behind in P4. Vettel and Alonso have stayed out for an extra lap before having their own mini battle. Vettel's stop is clean, and the Red Bull driver retains the lead. But Ferrari have trouble with Alonso's right front tyre, and the Spaniard loses a place to Hamilton, rejoining in P3.

The stewards have just announced that there will be no action following the Trulli-Senna accident. But they're keeping busy, this time investigating the Buemi-Glock collision, which led to the retirement of both drivers.

Lap 34, and the Safety Car's still out on track. Pretty soon it will merit a place on the podium. Avoiding such embarrassments, race control have announced that it will be in at the end of this lap.

And Hamilton runs wide into the first corner, giving Alonso the chance to reclaim the place lost. The Asturian makes the most of the opportunity, demoting the Brit to P3. With the improving track conditions, expect to see a battle between these two – not only are they fighting for the drivers' crown, but Hamilton's pride is now at stake.

Nick Heidfeld and Adrian Sutil are gearing up for battle, but Sutil runs wide and cedes a place to the Sauber driver. There is some poetic justice in Sutil's off; the German attempted a semi-dangerous manoeuvre on Button that forced the Brit off track and saw him lose a host of places. The McLaren driver's early tyre call is now largely redundant, and he is circulating at the back of the pack, championship chances as good as over.

Lap 41, and the track is getting dryer by the minute. It will take a brave man to lead the charge to the pits for new rubber, but the inters might be past their strategic best. And with that Vitaly Petrov is the next man to join the list of retirees. The young Russian lost it on a slippery kerb and crashed deep in a run-off area, necessitating yellow flags but no Safety Car.

The sun is beginning to fade in Korea, suffusing the track with a golden glow. There are thirteen laps remaining, but the light might not hold for the twenty-odd minutes it will take to complete them.

Hamilton is slowly eating away at the gap to Alonso. He has 25 minutes to get the job done before time is called on the race. So no pressure there then. The frontrunners have reached the backmarker of Yamamoto's HRT, and the time lost in overtaking him widens the Hamilton/Alonso gap to nearly two seconds.

And at the start of lap 46, it all goes wrong for Vettel. First, Alonso passes him for the lead. Then there's a puff of smoke, flying bits of engine, and a retirement for the young German. Hamilton moves up to P2, and both Red Bulls are out of the race, with Vettel's car on fire. This strengthens Ferrari and McLaren's championship chances, and moves Massa up to P3. The Scuderia are moving up in the constructors' standings, and fans are now in for a truly nail-biting run to the title in Abu Dhabi. Bye-bye Red Bull walkover.

If the race finishes like this, Alonso will have an eleven-point lead in the championship going to Interlagos. Mark Webber will be in P2, Hamilton in P3, Vettel down in P4.

More poetic justice for Sutil, who has spent much of the race pushing other drivers off track. While trying to overtake Kobayashi, the German driver lost it going over a kerb, and ran beyond the run-off into the grass, losing a tyre in the process. We're now down to 15 drivers, meaning more than one-third of the grid has retired.

Six laps to go, and if they're anything like the previous six, we could see Yamamoto on the podium. Not really. But there's no doubt that - despite the rain and subsequent delays - this maiden outing to Korea has been far more thrilling than anyone would have expected. Bernie Ecclestone couldn't have dreamed of such excitement - the race was tailor-made to delight fans around the world, with constant changes in position to both race and championship standings.

Five laps to go, and we're running out of time. There is the possibility of half-points this afternoon, which would help the Red Bulls but hinder the competition.

It's been a good day for Williams, who have two drivers comfortably in the points - Barrichello in P5 and Hulkenberg in P6. Liuzzi is in P8, having out-performed Sutil for the first time in living memory. And that's not just down to the latter's retirement - Liuzzi was in the points while Sutil was lapping at the back of the pack.

On lap 52, Hulkenberg pits from P8 for new tyres. It looks as though the young German picked up a puncture during a brief foray off track. Offs and spins are now the order of the day in the closing stages of the Korean Grand Prix, with both Massa and Button spinning and wobbling but keeping it together without losing position.

Barrichello loses places to Kubica and Liuzzi, pushing the Williams driver down to P7. So much for the aforementioned good day for the Grove outfit - I'm obviously a jinx.

Two laps to go, and the race might just finish in the allotted two hours. Alonso still leads, with a comfortable ten second gap to Hamilton. The McLaren driver is likely to be in the middle of a Ferrari sandwich when the chequered flag falls, with his teammate far behind and out of the points.

It's the last lap of the Korean Grand Prix. Could the race get any more exciting? Alonso's playing it safe at the head of the pack - no point throwing away an almost certain win with the chequered flag within reach.

And with that, the race is over, won by Alonso. Hamilton crosses the line in P2, followed by Massa, Schumacher, Kubica, Liuzzi, Barrichello, Kobayashi, Heidfeld, Hulkenberg, Alguersuari, Button, Kovalainen, Senna, and Yamamoto. No one else managed to finish the race.

Korean Grand Prix results

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 25pts
2. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 18pts
3. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 15pts
4. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 12pts
5. Robert Kubica (Renault) 10pts
6. Tonio Liuzzi (Force India) 8pts
7. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 6pts
8. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 4pts
9. Nick Heidfeld (Sauber) 2pts
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Williams) 1pt
11. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 0pts
12. Jenson Button (McLaren) 0pts
13. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 0pts
14. Bruno Senna (HRT) 0pts
15. Sakon Yamamoto (HRT) 0pts

Adrian Sutil (Force India) NC
Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) NC
Vitaly Petrov (Renault) NC

Timo Glock (Virgin) RET
Sebastian Buemi (Toro Rosso) RET
Lucas di Grassi (Virgin) RET
Jarno Trulli (Lotus) RET
Mark Webber (Red Bull) RET
Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) RET

World Drivers' Championship standings

1. Fernando Alonso 231pts
2. Mark Webber 220pts
3. Lewis Hamilton 210pts
4. Sebastian Vettel 206pts
5. Jenson Button 189pts
6. Felipe Massa 143pts
7. Robert Kubica 124pts
8. Nico Rosberg 122pts

9. Michael Schumacher 66pts
10. Rubens Barrichello 47pts
11. Adrian Sutil 47pts
12. Kamui Kobayashi 31pts
13. Tonio Liuzzi 21pts
14. Vitaly Petrov 19pts
15. Nico Hulkenberg 18pts
16. Sebastien Buemi 8pts
17. Pedro de la Rosa 6pts
18. Nick Heidfeld 6pts
19. Jaime Alguersuari 3pts
20. Heikki Kovalainen Opts
21. Jarno Trulli Opts
22. Karun Chandhok Opts
23. Bruno Senna Opts
24. Lucas di Grassi Opts
25. Timo Glock Opts
26. Sakon Yamamoto Opts
27. Christian Klien Opts

World Constructors' Championship standings

1. Red Bull 426pts
 2. McLaren 399pts
 3. Ferrari 374pts
 4. Mercedes 188pts
 5. Renault 143pts
 6. Force India 68pts
 7. Williams 65pts
 8. Sauber 43pts
 9. Toro Rosso 11pts
 10. Lotus Opts
 11. HRT Opts
 12. Virgin Opts
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