

Singapore GP



SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2016

15TH RACE

PRACTICE 1	FRI	6 AM
PRACTICE 2	FRI	9:30 AM
PRACTICE 3	SAT	6 AM
QUALIFYING	SAT	9 AM
RACE	SUN	8 AM

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Official Outcome – Monza



Rosberg | Hamilton | Vettel | Raikkonen | Ricciardo | Bottas | Verstappen | Perez | -Massa | Hulkenberg

Rewind with Rob

They say that Monza is where engines are king. Down force packages and chassis adjustments are shelved for this one weekend per year. On the straights of Italy, horsepower and torque are everything. If that's the case, the coronation of Mercedes power is complete. Mercedes locked out the front row by qualifying 1-2 and then finished 1-2. But it wasn't as quite as straightforward as it might seem.

Mercedes was head and shoulders above the other teams in Italy. During the Free Practice sessions on Friday and Saturday morning, the teams were trying to figure out just how much they could push the tyres and how fast each rubber compound would be. In Qualifying 2, the teams switched to the very softest and fastest compound available, SuperSoft, to give themselves the lap times necessary to make it to Q3. All but Mercedes, that is. Mercedes was fast enough that they could do Q2 on the slower Soft compound, and still make it through to Q3.

Because the top 10 teams have to start the race on the tyres that they set their fastest Q2 lap on, the Ferraris, Red Bulls and others in the top 10 were starting the race on the fast degrading SuperSofts. As a result, they had to make two pit stops to get fresh tyres. The Silver Arrows started on the Softs, ran them longer, and then made just one stop. The starts at Monza are usually not critical because the track is so straight that a fast car has plenty of opportunity to pass. But in the battle between Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton for

the Drivers' Championship, the start was critical. Hamilton struggled with the clutch bite point and was immediately swamped by his teammate Nico, both Ferraris, Ricciardo and Bottas as the lights went out. No matter. The Mercedes engine allowed Hamilton to move back up to second by the checkered flag. The damage was done however, as Nico took the 25 points for first place and brought the gap between them to just 2 points in the overall championship.

Also of note, Daniel Ricciardo had a spectacular pass of Bottas at Turn 1 late in the race. Daniel was on a softer tyre, but even so, he was pretty far back as they entered the braking zone. Bottas braked and Daniel squeezed by him on the inside without locking the wheels up. But the Renault engine was clearly the 3rd most powerful, at best, and 5th place was the best Ricciardo could muster.

The fellows in the McLaren paddock also had reason to be happy. Monza was not expected to be friendly to the Honda-powered McLaren. But Alonso pitted with only 3 laps to go to take on SuperSoft tyres and see what he could do. With a low fuel load and new tyres, he set the fastest lap of the race. That was much needed reassurance that McLaren is on the upswing.

Ferrari's engine upgrade paid dividends and Vettel finished on the podium in Ferrari's home race with his teammate right behind him. Other than that, not a lot to report on the drag race from Italy.





Track Talking

Everyone's favourite night race. I would let Charlie beat me in fantasy football this week if he could locate Singapore on a map.

I have very high hopes for this race. The track plays well to the Red Bull aerodynamic strengths. Similar track Monaco where Danny Ric had the top spot before his team let him down. Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel won last year's race, but I don't anticipate much of a challenge from the Ferraris this year. Kimi has been a little too concerned with Max on the track, just shut your trap and drive.

Singapore is a hot, humid race. Take it from a guy who knows, these drivers better hydrate early and often. You also need to decide early on Saturday night how you are planning to watch live. The lights go off early in the AM, so you either need to stay up all night to watch or get up very early. One too many pints for this guy and you better believe I fall asleep on the couch during lap 16. Not an ideal time for live watching, but you will never hear me complain on a race weekend, too much to be thankful for.

So some big news going into this weekend. America comes through and throws down some serious Dough Re Me to buy up Formula 1. Writing was on the wall, some of the top young talent stateside were growing the sport one newsletter at a time and Big Racing wanted to wet their beaks. I hope the rest of the F1 fan base is ready to ditch their shandys for some Bud heavys and replace those lady jeans with some U cut Wranglers.



Charlie's Chatter

- Sauber's 2017 driver line-up will be selected because of talent and not financial backing, team principal Monisha Kaltenborn says.
- Williams' 17-year-old Canadian development driver Lance Stroll has secured enough super license points to be able to race in F1 next season. A promotion to the Williams senior team is rumored.
- Williams' Formula 1 deputy team principal Claire Williams says she "would have loved" to have signed Button for the 2017 season before the Briton signed a new deal with McLaren.
- Ahead of this weekend's Singapore GP, F1 world champion Lewis Hamilton has been attending the New York Fashion Week in the company of pop star Taylor Swift, American model Martha Hunt and TV's Yolanda Hadid.
- Bernie Ecclestone will stay on to work alongside F1's prospective new chairman with a takeover of the sport sealed late last week.
- News from two weeks ago...Jenson Button will not race in Formula 1 in 2017 - but could return to the grid in 2018 with McLaren after agreeing a new two-year role at the team. Stoffel Vandoorne will instead race alongside Fernando Alonso next season.

Fantasy Focus



(P1) Tonka BMW | (P2) O'Brien Red Bull Audi | (P3) Scuderia Drew

Tonka BMW and O'Brien Red Bull Audi crossed the line together, which leaves Tonka BMW with one less race to eat into O'Brien Red Bull Audi's lead and claim the top step in the GP Predictor championship. Scuderia Drew rounded out the podium in his home race and received wild applause from the Italian crowd.

- Only one team picked Rosberg to win; that team did not even make the GP Predictor podium
- Seven teams thought Hamilton would win
- Three teams thought Red Bull would overcome the Renault engine weakness and make the podium
- No one foresaw Alonso setting the fastest lap
- Two teams were only one correct guess away from 60 bonus points that come with 6 correct positions
- 3 engine replacement hijinks.

Tonka BMW (69)

Hamilton, Rosberg, and Vettel. Mercedes, Ferrari, and Red Bull. These were not controversial picks and because there were few surprises at Monza this led to the big payday and first place. Tonka BMW scored points for every single prediction.

O'Brien Red Bull Audi (69)

It was almost as if O'BRBA stole the picks from his older brother. They were identical. In the bonus categories, O'BRBA predicted Sainz to have the most positions gained, which would have been a big ask from a car running the 2015 spec Ferrari engine. O'BRBA

maintained his impressive lead in the season long championship race.

Scuderia Drew (52)

There was a lot correct here, including the Mercedes, Ferrari, Red Bull pecking order. However, Scuderia Drew was one of several teams to believe that Mad Max would best his older, more experienced teammate. Additionally, this squad somewhat inexplicably believed McLaren could make a strong showing at Monza, predicting Alonso to take P7. Scuderia Drew is currently 5th overall but not far behind 4th and not far ahead of 6th.

Sauber Alfa Romeo (41)

This squad bought the hype about the improved Renault engines and predicted that the Red Bulls would fill out the podium behind Rosberg. Not this year. The pick of Rosberg to win was inspired given Lewis's history of success in Italy (and it was correct!). Sauber is currently in 3rd overall and battling with Tonka BMW for 2nd place.

JBone (38)

used a split strategy for the Italy predictions. This squad split up the constructors, going Mercedes, Red Bull, Mercedes, Ferrari, Red Bull, Ferrari. Such a line up was unorthodox because the track allows the field to sort itself out easily into a strength-of-engine pecking order. But JBone has been known all year for the unorthodox picks. That has landed him in 7th place in the GP Predictor league. Only one or two strong results, however, could propel a spot or two up the ranks.

FO Racing (37)

The picks were solid, but not spectacular. FO Racing had Mercedes as 1-2 and Ferrari as P3. It did overestimate Red Bull a bit and bizarrely put McLaren in P7 and P8. The Grosjean pick in P10 was only one off and something no one else in the league predicted. FO Racing is currently in 6th place and locked in that 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th dogfight where there are only 65 points separating the teams.

Schweizer F1 (29)

The decision to put Red Bull ahead of Ferrari scuppered this squad's chances of having a successful race. The promotion of Alonso and Kvyat into the top 10 were bold choices that left some of the other squads scratching their heads. Nevertheless, Schweizer F1 is still in 4th place overall and can consolidate that position with strong showings going forward.

The state of the GP Predictor league: Pit Road Hooligans is strong. Globally, there are well over 130,000 teams making predictions. The top three teams in Pit Road Hooligans are ranked 589, 3889 and 6399. Pit Road Hooligans is the F1 of F1 Predictor leagues!

Moment in History

This week's moment in history takes you back to September 2008. The newly built Marina Bay Street Circuit is hosting the fifteenth race of the 2008 Formula One season and the first ever Formula One night race. Felipe Massa, holding the second spot in the Drivers' Championship standings, has qualified first and looks extremely strong in his Ferrari. After thirteen laps, the order of drivers has remained relatively stagnant as Singapore proves to be a difficult track for overtaking. The one exception is Fernando Alonso who has dropped from 15th on the grid to last place due to a pit stop. Then, on the fourteenth lap, a Renault R28 driven by Nelson Piquet, Jr. crashes into the circuit wall at turn seventeen. The safety car is deployed.



Nearly all the leading drivers decide to take advantage of the safety car deployment and dive into pit lane. Again, the lone exception is Piquet's Renault teammate, Fernando Alonso.

Alonso, who had previously made an early pit stop, rockets to the front and remains there for the duration of the race. While Alonso celebrates his victory, Piquet is questioned about his crash. Piquet describes the crash as a simple mistake.



A year later, after being dropped by the Renault team following the 2009 Hungarian Grand Prix, Piquet admits to the media that he was asked by

Renault management to deliberately crash to improve Alonso's race. Chaos ensues and the International Automobile Federation (FIA) launches an investigation in 'Crashgate'. Renault is found guilty and charged with conspiracy. The team is disqualified from Formula One and handed a two-year suspension. Meanwhile, the Renault managing director, Flavio Briatore, is handed an indefinite ban, and executive direction of engineering, Pat Symond, is given a five-year ban. The management bans were subsequently overturned by a French court, although both men decided against returning to the sport for a period of time. Some say the Renault brand has never recovered.



Wag of the Week

Many professionals prefer to keep their work life and home life separate. Count Sebastian Vettel among that crowd. Vettel, a four-time Formula One World Champion who currently drives for Scuderia Ferrari, has carefully kept his life with longtime girlfriend Hanna Prater private. The public knows very little about Vettel and Prater's relationship except that the two first met in grade school and that they now have two daughters together. The secretive family of four now resides in Thurgovia, Switzerland.

Hanna and the girls rarely attend Formula One races although Hanna is said to carefully monitor Seb's accomplishments. In fact, it is extremely rare to find someone from Vettel's team that has actually met Hanna Prater. In 2013, Sebastian famously tweeted, "Never bring your girlfriend to work with you, if my girlfriend was here I would probably feel the necessity to look after her." Perhaps there are other more wicked intentions behind Vettel keeping Prater away from the Formula One lifestyle?

In other news, *The F1 Newsletter* would like to send our heartfelt congratulations to Valtteri Bottas and Emilia Pikkarainen. The young couple, who were recently featured in this column, tied the knot this past weekend. Onnea!



Tyre me out

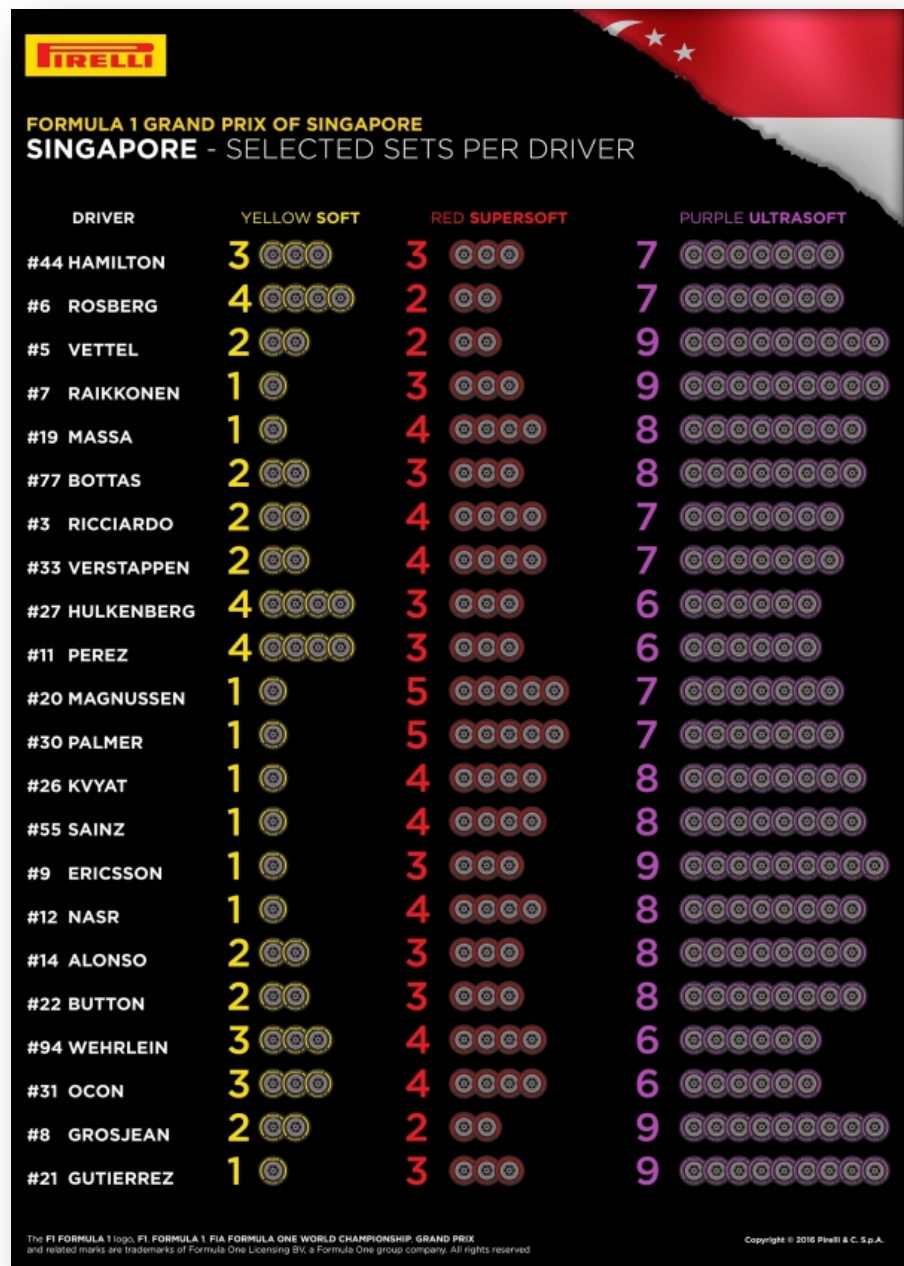
The Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore is narrow, hot and twisty. Pirelli brings its three softest compounds, UltraSoft (US), SuperSoft (SS) and Soft, for the grip they offer, and the teams burn them up quickly. Expect a two-stop or three-stop race.

In 2015, Pirelli brought the SS and Soft. The top 7 teams pitted twice, which is probably the minimum for this course. The two-stop strategy is abetted by the omnipresent Safety Cars; there has never been a race in Singapore without a Safety Car. When the cars are running at the lower speeds behind the Safety Car, they can prolong their tyre life.

In 2015, the Soft tyre ran up to 33 laps, the SS up to 25. We'll see what the US can do this year. Pirelli is speculating that the fastest tyre strategy in 2016 may be to start on the US (teams have to use the Q2 tyre, which is almost certainly the US), stop and put on the SS and stop a second time and go to another set of SS. That US, SS, SS strategy would push the tyres to the edge of their useful life on this 61 lap course.

Marina Bay is a street circuit where passing is difficult, which means that track position is at a premium. Furthermore, the pit lane delta is one of the highest of the year. This means that teams may risk running tyres even after their grippiness wanes instead of pitting for fresh tyres and trying to overtake those now-slower cars that didn't. The teams that can protect their tyres through a superior chassis or through more cautious driving will be at an advantage.

All of that said, this race has never avoided a Safety Car. If and when that comes out, we should expect to see the strategy changed on the fly.



Circuit City

MARINA BAY STREET CIRCUIT

FIRST GRAND PRIX	NUMBER OF LAPS	CIRCUIT LENGTH	RACE DISTANCE	LAP RECORD
2008	61	5.065 KM	308.828 KM	1:50.041 DANIEL RICCIARDO (2015)

