

## 2005 F1 Season

# Bahrain Grand Prix- Round 3 of 19 Sakhir, Bahrain

By Alex "Zander" Keep

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<b>Circuit Name:</b>	The Bahrain International Circuit, Sakhir
<b>Lap Distance:</b>	3.381mile/5.411km
<b>Race Distance:</b>	186.004mile/297.605km 57 laps
<b>Lap Record:</b>	Michael Schumacher, 1m30.252s
<b>Number of Laps:</b>	57

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## Last Time

### *Malaysia*

A great win by Fernando Alonso showed that the R25s are going to be the cars to beat this season. Interestingly the Ferraris were nowhere either in qualifying or on race day. The problem seemed to be partly due to the team running their old car (whose aerodynamics are second only to Minardi in terms of being a hasty bolt on job!) but mostly because Bridgestone have been totally caught napping this season. Another team in trouble are BAR. Two races in and no end in sight for the reliability problems. It almost seems easier for the team to revert to last year's car and start again! Nick Heidfeld produced his first podium for three years in a well judged race that showed his superstar potential. His team mate Mark Webber threw away a certain podium with an ill judged move on Fisichella's Renault that was clearly struggling for grip (it does not take a genius to tell you that overtaking a car that is on the absolute limit of adhesion on the outside is not a bright idea!). Despite Montoya's fourth place McLaren still look as if they are not living up to their potential. Montoya was some way off the ultimate pace of the front-runners, while, Kimi was unfortunate, it is also clear that the Silver Arrows were not kind on their tires. The real stars of this season (behind the dominant Renaults) have been Toyota and Red Bull. Many have been keen to point to Dave Pitchforth's contribution to the team before he was replaced as team principal. Although this is certainly true it does negate the role of current team principal Christian Horner. There is no such doubt over who was responsible for Toyota's formidable performance. Mike Gascoigne has always said it would take him a couple of years to get the team right and it is clear that was he who redesigned the aerodynamics of the TF105 after its initially poor testing results. Gascoigne says he believes that Toyota could win this weekend and there are few who doubt him.

## Jacques Villeneuve

*"Bahrain is a new track for me. I haven't seen it but I know that it's dry, sunny and sandy so visually it must be very interesting. Talking with other drivers, they say that the track is fun to drive but I didn't see the race on TV last year so I don't really know what to expect. It will definitely be an interesting trip as I've never been in this country before. I am also going to play with an F1 video game that includes this track to get used to the layout, but I will really have to find out when I get there. We are not going to test before the race so I hope that we will be able to get the best out of the equipment in Bahrain. We made some good progress concerning set-up in Malaysia so I am confident that we are heading in the right direction."*

## David Coulthard:

*"My impressions of the track are that it is challenging due to several heavy braking corners which can gain or lose you a lot of time. The surface is high wear so tire choice will be especially difficult as you juggle one lap performance over making them last for the whole race. It is very dusty off line and last year we experienced a short sand storm which made things tricky before the GP. I did not really have the chance to look around Bahrain itself but the welcome we got from the moment we reached Customs at the airport through to leaving on Sunday night was excellent and generally every one was impressed with the facilities."*

The brand-new Bahrain circuit had the honor of welcoming modern Formula 1 to the Middle East for the first time in 2004. The venue is designed by top circuit architect Hermann Tilke. Like Sepang in Malaysia (another Tilke signature track), the Bahrain International Circuit features a straight of more than a kilometer in length, followed by a sharp right-hander that should be useful for overtaking. The rest of the circuit is a mix of quick and slow turns, plus another two substantial straights. The design of the buildings at the facility is intended to reflect the country's Arabic culture. The pits, paddock and start/finish area has an "oasis" feel, with a healthy spread of specially-planted greenery, but the circuit's two loops into the desert take the cars into a more typical desert landscape. The track is located within a comfortable drive of Manama, the capital of the small island nation in the Persian Gulf. Although the Bahrain GP represents F1's first visit to the Middle East, it is not the first time a grand prix has been held in an Arab country as the 1958 Morocco GP was won by Stirling Moss. The country hosts a 24-hour karting race every year. The Bahrain Superkart Challenge takes place at the National Stadium in Isa Town. 70,000 cubic meters of concrete were used in the construction of the track, along with 8,500 tons of steel. The circuit is enclosed by 82,000 tires and 5,000 meters of fencing. The track can accommodate 45,000 spectators - around seven per cent of the population of Bahrain! There is grandstand seating for 10,000 and parking for 13,000 cars.

## The Track

A first grand prix in the Middle East has been seen as part of the brave new world for grand prix racing where it expands beyond its traditional European-centric base and reaches out to far corners of the world to be a truly global sport. The track cost \$150 million to complete and the race very nearly didn't occur when the organizers asked to cancel it with three weeks to go due to construction work running late. Bernie told the organizers to hire more people and this they duly did! Even so some stands were not going to be completed until after the inaugural race. Welsh granite was imported for the track in order to give the most grip and the sand immediately surrounding the track is glued down with a special resin to prevent the track getting too gritty. The inaugural race ended up being entertaining behind the Ferrari's disappearing act. Kimi Raikkonen ended up having a ding dong battle with Christian Klein while Jenson Button followed up his first podium in Malaysia with another one here. Jarno Trulli and Fernando Alonso were pretty unimpressive in the Renaults yet still managed a healthy haul of points though the McLaren were the real talking point with the MP4/19 looking evil and unreliable all weekend.

## Last Year's Results

Position	No	Driver	Team	Engine	Time	Laps	Delay/Retirement
1	1	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	1:28'34.875	57	
2	2	Rubens Barrichello	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	1:28'36.242	57	1.367
3	9	Jenson Button	BAR	Honda V10	1:29'01.562	57	26.687
4	7	Jarno Trulli	Renault	Renault V10	1:29'07.089	57	32.214
5	10	Takuma Sato	BAR	Honda	1:29'27.335	57	52.460
6	8	Fernando Alonso	Renault	Renault V10	1:29'28.031	57	53.156
7	4	Ralf Schumacher	Williams	BMW	1:29'33.030	57	58.155
8	14	Mark Webber	Jaguar	Cosworth	1:28'39.255	56	1 Lap

## Championship Standings

Drivers			
Rank	Driver	Team	Points
1	Fernando Alonso	Renault	16
2	G.Fisichella	Renault	10
3	R.Barrichello	Ferrari	8
4	D.Coulthard	Red Bull	8
5	J.Montoya	McLaren	8
6	J.Trulli	Toyota	8
7	N.Heidfeld	Williams	6
8	R.Schumacher	Toyota	4
9	M.Webber	Williams	4

10	C.Klien	Red Bull	3
11	M.Schumacher	Ferrari	2
12	K.Raikkonen	McLaren	1
13	C.Albers	Minardi	0
=13	J.Button	BAR	0
=13	A.Davidson	BAR	0
=13	P.Friesacher	Minardi	0
=13	N.Karthikeyan	Jordan	0
=13	F.Massa	Sauber	0
=13	T.Monteiro	Jordan	0
=13	T.Sato	BAR	0
=13	J.Villeneuve	Sauber	0

## Constructors

Rank	Team	Points
1	Renault	26
2	Toyota	12
3	Red Bull	11
4	Ferrari	10
=4	Williams	10
6	McLaren	9

## Situation

The Bahrain raceway is about thirty kilometers from the city of Bahrain at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. Bahrain is rapidly becoming the financial center for the Middle East and this is the only major sporting event that has been held in the region. Terrorism has been high in the minds of many involved with the race and the Foreign Office's advice last year not to attend the race shows how seriously it is being treated in some quarters. Still none of the teams or personnel are being put off by this threat and it seems unlikely that the race will be a target.

## Setup & Strategy

The new tire and engine rules coupled with the unseasonably cold weather for the first race last year means that the track is still much of an unknown. It is highly unlikely that the cool conditions that hit the track last year will be replicated and instead baking heat is widely anticipated for this race. Almost every team will have new engines for this race and the Michelins seemed to wear well in Malaysia two weeks ago. Whether Bridgestone will be able to produce a new tire to match their rivals in time for this weekend is the big talking point.

## A Lap Of Sakhir

Heading down the long start/finish straight you brake hard for the first corner. A tight right hander that is taken in second or third gear. Accelerating away you go through a

right/left sweep accelerating hard down another long straight before again hitting the anchors for a second gear right hander. A shorter straight follows before a left-right section that looks reminiscent of Becketts at Silverstone or Sepang's fast chicane before the drivers hit the brakes for a hairpin right, short straight and then a hairpin left. Another straight follows running parallel to the pitlane which leads into a sweeping left hander rolling into a sweeping right hander (which is taken in fourth or fifth depending upon grip levels) and then leading to another second gear right hander. This leads onto another long straight before yet another second gear right hander sees the drivers back on the pitstraight.

## **The Teams**

### **Ferrari**

*(Red with Marlboro signs)*

1. **M. Schumacher**
2. **Barrichello**

After the team's poor performance in the first two races of the season Ferrari will be bringing their F2005 car to Bahrain for the first time. Although the F2005 is said to be a second quicker per lap than the old car, its rushed introduction (despite several mechanical problems in testing) is seen as a panic measure. There is no doubt that the car is fast and a vast improvement but, considering the main problem at the moment comes not from the car but from the tires, it is difficult to see how the team can gain from using it this weekend.

### **BAR**

*(White with Red Lucky Strike Roundels on it)*

3. **Button**
4. **Sato**

After a race best described as character building for the team BAR and Honda have been testing frantically to ensure that the embarrassment of Malaysia is not repeated this weekend. Anthony Davidson's three lap race heavily dented his chances of replacing Villeneuve at Sauber as he was outqualified by Button and, despite making a cracking start, did not get a chance to show his potential before his engine expired. This time out Sato is back and it is hoped by all concerned that a more impressive performance from the team will result.

### **Renault**

*(Dark & Light Blue & Yellow with Mild Seven on it)*

5. **Fisichella**
6. **Alonso**

One team who certainly not be said to be underperforming this season are Renault. Back to back wins in Australia and Bahrain have left Fisichella and Alonso first and second in the driver's championship. The team are performing well and there is little

doubt that Renault go into this race as favorites to win even though they had a pretty torrid time of it last year. There is a healthy rivalry between the team mates but they are both building towards the team's ambitions and this is leading the team on to greater efforts. For this race at least it seems unlikely that they will have anything to fear from Ferrari.

### **Williams**

*(Dark Blue & White with Compaq & Allianz signs on it)*

7. **Webber**
8. **Heidfeld**

After Malaysia Mark Webber admitted that he had been racing with a broken rib. Apart from the potential problems if he had had a heavy crash, can you imagine how much it must have hurt when Fisichella and he played bumper cars at the hairpin in Sepang?! Frank Williams has admitted that he has been surprised by Nick Heidfeld and that the German's technical input to the team has been better than the team has enjoyed for some time. Considering the lack of depth of the team's technical department this year this has to be a good thing and Heidfeld has been said to be responsible in no small part for the aerodynamic improvements now on both cars. Button may well have his work cut out returning to the team at the end of the season.

### **McLaren**

*(Gray with West signs on it)*

9. **Montoya**
10. **Raikkonen**

The big news for McLaren is the non appearance of Juan Pablo Montoya for the team this weekend. Montoya injured his shoulder playing tennis last weekend and as a result will not be able to drive this weekend. The team have asked test driver Pedro de la Rosa to step up to the plate in his place. De La Rosa knows the MP4/20 better than either race driver, having done the bulk of the testing work on the car, and as a result is expected to do better this weekend than he managed in his two seasons for Jaguar when he partnered Eddie Irvine.

### **Sauber**

*(Mid Blue with a yellow airbox & white nose & front wing with Credit Suisse & Petronas written on it)*

11. **Villeneuve**
12. **Massa**

With question marks hanging over Villeneuve like the Sword of Damocles Jacques knows that this is really his last chance to impress. Red Bull's Christian Horner has done nothing to stabilize the situation by suggesting that he would be prepared to "lend" the team either Liuzzi or Klein so that both could experience F1! Sauber are most likely to select Anthony Davidson (despite his brief showing in Sepang). Massa is likely to add to his solid showing last time out. With Bridgestone performing so badly Peter Sauber must be relieved (to say the least) about his switch to Michelin though the car's instability may be a problem when the team reaches the more fiddly European circuits.

## **Toyota**

*(Red & White with Toyota & Panasonic logos)*

- 14. R Schumacher
- 15. Trulli

With the team in generally spiffy mood following their encouraging start to the season chief designer Mike Gascoigne is suggesting that Toyota may well chalk up their first win this weekend. Although that would be good for the sport at large it looks highly unlikely. Trulli and Schumacher are both good drivers but neither has won a race where they have not been in the best car on the track. Additionally the Toyota looks to be worse than the Renault at looking after its tires and consequently any lead that the red and white cars may get in the early part of the race is sure to be demolished when the cars get into the last third. That said Toyota are looking very good for another podium.

## **Red Bull Racing**

*(Dark blue with yellow airbox & thin red and white stripes down the side)*

- 16. Coulthard
- 17. Klein

Another double helping of points in Malaysia shows that Australia was not just a fluke. Red Bull are still sizing up their engine supplier options for next year with Ferrari, BMW and Cosworth looking like favorites at the moment. The main problems with any of these options is the lack of manufacturer support (something that team bosses say is vital to any engine deal). The team's continued improvement in Bahrain is sure to be of crucial importance in securing a decent contract. Luckily Christian Klein produced his best performance of the season in Bahrain last year so another impressive race should be in prospect.

## **Midland Jordan**

*(Yellow with Sobraine on it)*

- 18. Karthekeinan
- 19. Monteiro

Crawling around at the back of the pack the EJ15 ended up 3 laps down last tie out. Testing is virtually nonexistent and development work seems securely focused on next year's challenger. That said Karthekeinan is looking very impressive in his car and managed to lap his team mate in Malaysia. A definite star of the future, it is just a huge pity that such talent is being restricted to such a poor car. Maybe Midland should be looking at farming him out to Sauber and putting Justin Wilson in his place!!!

## **Minardi**

*(TBC black, white & red - OzJet on the sidepods & engine cover)*

- 20. Leinders
- 21. Freidsecher

If Jordan are off the pace then it is difficult to see why Minardi are turning up to the first

few races this year! Like Ferrari Minardi are planning to introduce a new car at the start of European season, unlike Ferrari Minardi have not swayed in their plans and therefore Bahrain will see the last outing of the PS03. Minardi's using Bridgestone tires has led to some parties suggesting that the Japanese company may pay Minardi to do more tire testing for them. Ferrari's limited data from Fiorano needs backing up with that found in other conditions with the result that Jordan and Minardi may well attend team tests paid for by Bridgestone. For this race Minardis will be slow and be mostly seen getting out of the way as they get lapped.....again!

## Predictions

<b>Qualifying</b>	<b>Race</b>
1. Fisichella	1. Alonso
2. Alonso	2. Fisichella
3. Trulli	3. R Schumacher