

2005 F1 Season

European Grand Prix Preview

Nurbergring - Round 7 of 19

By Alex "Zander" Keep

Circuit Name: Nurbergring
Circuit Length: 5.139 Kilometers
Lap Record: Juan Pablo Montoya, 1m18.354s
Number of Laps: 67

Last Race

Monaco

The second win on the trot for Kimi Raikkonen has firmly given the impetus to McLaren. Renault's appalling wear rate on their tires left them as sitting duck for their pursuers during the dying laps in Monaco. Heidfeld's classy move (and Webber's rather more clutzy attempts!) showed that Alonso just did not have the grip at the end of the race. That said, to write of Renault's wear rates as anything more than a miscalculation would be to read too much into it. Qualifying will be of a new style from this weekend with only one flying lap to decide the grid – this should make for a far more exciting session.

The Track's F1 History

The Nurbergring normally has cracking races. Its reappearance (as the Luxembourg Grand Prix) in 1995 resulted in a fantastic race between Schumacher in the Benetton and Jean Alesi' Ferrari on a drying track. The other thing about that race was it marked a new low for McLaren as its cars were overtaken by the back of the grid Pacific team. The team could not let Bertrand Gachot know how far he was in front of Hakkinen using a pit board because they didn't have Hakkinen's name to display!

In 1996 Jacques Villeneuve scored his first formula one win here having held off sustained pressure from Michael Schumacher's Ferrari.

In 1997 Ralf Schumacher made is debut at his home race by taking both his teammate and his brother off at the start! In the end Villeneuve repeated his win of the year before.

1998 saw Hakkinen take an excellent win in which he used great strategy and some fantastic middle laps to overcome Schumacher's pace.

In 1999 Johnny Herbert took a surprise win for Stewart (their only F1 win). The race was nothing if not eventful as Diniz had a big crash at the start, Fisichella and Coulthard both crashed out while leading, Frentzen (the pole sitter) retired from the race while leading and both Irvine and Hakkinen had nightmare races.

In 2000 the race was a little less frenetic with a three-way battle between Button, Herbert and Wurz being the real scrap of the race. Up at the front it was more like business as usual with Schuey winning from Hakkinen with Coulthard 3rd and Barrichello 4th. The race was mostly run in wet conditions but, unlike most at the Nurburgring, it was a bit of a non-starter in terms of thrills and spills.

In 2001 there was a tussle between the brothers Schumacher for the win which was resolved in Michael's favor when Ralf ran over a white line on the exit of the pitlane incurring a stop go penalty. Juan Pablo Montoya took up the chase after Ralf dropped back but was unable to catch Schuey thereby earning Schuey his second win in a row at the track closest to his home in Kerpen.

In 2002 the Ferraris drove into the distance while most drivers struggled with the slow right left section just after the pit straight. In the end pole sitter Montoya pitched into Coulthard there effectively ending any last hope the Scot had of fighting for the title. Rubens Barrichello took the win ahead of a surprisingly poorly performing Michael Schumacher with Kimi Raikkonen taking a fighting third and Ralf Schumacher slipping down to fourth after a front row start. The race was also memorable for a spat between Massa and Heidfeld in the Saubers which effectively cost Massa his seat.

In 2003 Ralf picked up a win after Kimi Raikkonen's dominant display was ended by his engine blowing up. Montoya banged Michael Schumacher's Ferrari into a spin while Alonso managed to send Coulthard heavenwards by an insane piece of early braking. In the end a Williams 1-2 was attained more out of luck than out of outright pace while Rubens Barrichello drove a consistent race for third. Bumper car drivers Alonso and Schumacher were fourth and fifth while Webber's Jaguar, Button's BAR and Heidfeld's Sauber (after a great recovery drive from the pitlane) picked up the scraps.

Last Year it was a very Noah's ark style finish to the race with the cars tending to come home two by two. The Ferraris spoilt Jenson Button's hopes for a first win with the Brit coming third, behind him were the Renaults, Webber's Jaguar and the underperforming Williams of Montoya (where design problems seemed to be surfacing). The outstanding drive of the day probably went to a gutsy performance from Fisichella but overall the race was a bit dull.

Jarno Trulli's View:

"This weekend we start again, it is a new challenge. The circuit is different, the conditions are different, and we will just work as normal, trying to make the car as fast as possible. We made some improvements to the car before Monaco, but it was difficult to judge them accurately last weekend because it is such a strange circuit. The Nurburgring will give us a much better idea of how much we have improved the car's competitiveness, and so I am looking forward to starting practice. My approach this weekend will be the same as always: working normally to find a good consistent set-up.

Last weekend was fantastic, a sort of confirmation, but I will carry on doing my usual job and trying 100 per cent."

Michael Schumacher's View:

"Coming over the start/finish line, accelerating up to top gear, on the brakes, down to third gear and about 140kph, turning right and then left. Fast as you can out of the left-hander and balance the throttle in fourth or fifth gear around turn three. Slowing for turn four, the Ford Curve, in second gear at 115kph and then blast down the hill for the Dunlop Curve, the hairpin. Coming out of there and getting back on the power as quickly as possible, coming back up the hill and accelerating out of second gear, taking Turn Six and Turn Seven at over 250kph in fifth and sixth gear respectively."

"The next corner, the RTL Curve is difficult, especially in the wet, but it is also one of the best on the circuit. Braking from top gear to third and slowing from 290kph to 150kph as you turn left, it's easy to let the car snap away as you set it up for the slightly slower right-hander, Bit Curve. This is very important, as any mistake here will be punished at the chicane a bit further down the road. More importantly, if you want to overtake the car in front, then these turns have to be perfect."

"Down the hill, either on the tail of the car in front or in the lead, you sweep around the very fast Turn Ten flat out in top gear, arrive at the Veedol Chicane and slow the car as quickly as possible, dropping through five gears for the right-left shuffle. If you got RTL and Bit right, then you can get alongside cars on the left and try and outbrake them into the corner. Out of the chicane and around the Coca-Cola Curve as smoothly as possible; and you are back at the start/finish line for another lap. I remember passing Jean Alesi's Ferrari at the Veedol Chicane for the lead in 1995, with a handful of laps to go. It was a great feeling then, but let's hope that nobody passes the Ferrari there this weekend!"

Jenson Button's View:

"It goes without saying how much we racing drivers look forward to our next Grand Prix, but it's been five weeks since I last raced at Imola and I'm very excited about getting back in the car this weekend. The whole team is incredibly upbeat and determined. I've been so impressed with the way they've handled this situation and I can't wait to see what we can achieve at the Nurburgring. The most frustrating thing about the past few weeks has been knowing that we have a strong car with some very impressive new developments just sitting in the factory when we could have been out there challenging for podiums, if not wins. That's behind us now though. What matters is going forward and demonstrating why we belong at the top. I finished on the podium here last year in 3rd position and I know we can be stronger than that this time. I enjoy racing here at the best of times and the track has some great high-speed corners and interesting undulations. The car will be strong here, no question. I'm just counting down the hours now until free practice on Friday!"

The Track

Standing in the shadow of the famous Nordschlieffe, the present Grand Prix track provides modern and efficient facilities in safe surroundings. However, compared to the old 14-mile monster, which gave birth to the current layout, it is clinical and soulless. The old circuit was fast and dangerous and it was finally dropped from the Formula One calendar after Niki Lauda's accident.

The current circuit was then designed to incorporate the latest sporting and safety requirements. It staged its first Grand Prix in 1984 but the found itself in the wilderness again until 1995, when it became the semi-permanent home of the European GP in deference to the enormous popularity of motor racing in Germany after the rise of Michael Schumacher.

The first race back saw Schumacher charge from behind to pass Jean Alesi in the dying stages, while a year later Jacques Villeneuve held off the home hero for his first Formula One win.

Villeneuve took an easier victory in 1997 after the dominant McLarens disappeared in a cloud of engine smoke. Mika Hakkinen then won in 1998, beating Schumacher in a straight fight and virtually sealing the title in the process.

1999's race was a mixed weather epic that virtually anyone could have won. Heinz-Harald Frentzen and Ralf Schumacher were the stars of the event, but it was the equally impressive Johnny Herbert who eventually came through from 14th on the grid to take a shock win for the Stewart team.

Although it pales into insignificance with the amazing Nordschlieffe circuit, many of the drivers like the 'new' Nurburgring.

The track has a variety of corners and straights that make it interesting to drive, while allowing a rhythm to be built up.

The main problem is the weather, which is always completely unpredictable. Passing opportunities are not as scarce as they are at other circuits, with the SachsCurve and the Veedol-Curve the best places to take a chance.

Last Year's European Grand Prix Results

Position	No	Driver	Team	Engine	Time	Laps	Delay/ Retire- ment
1	1	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	1:32'35.101	60	
2	2	Rubens Barrichello	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	1:32'53.090	60	17.989
3	9	Jenson Button	BAR	Honda V10	1:32'57.634	60	22.533
4	7	Jarno Trulli	Renault	Renault V10	1:33'28.774	60	53.673
5	8	Fernando Alonso	Renault	Renault V10	1:33'36.088	60	1'00.987
6	11	G.Fisichella	Sauber	Petronas	1:33'48.549	60	1'13.448
7	14	Mark Webber	Jaguar	Cosworth	1:33'51.307	60	1'16.206
8	3	J.P.Montoya	Williams	BMW	1:32'46.774	59	1 Lap

Championship Standings

Drivers			
Rank	Driver	Team	Points
1	F. Alonso	Renault	49
2	K.Raikkonen	McLaren	27
3	J.Trulli	Toyota	26
4	M.Webber	Williams	18
5	N.Heidfeld	Williams	17
6	R.Schumacher	Toyota	17
7	G.Fisichella	Renault	14
8	J.Montoya	McLaren	14
9	M.Schumacher	Ferrari	12
10	D.Coulthard	Red Bull	10
11	R.Barrichello	Ferrari	9
12	A.Wurz	McLaren	6
13	J.Villeneuve	Sauber	5
14	P.de la Rosa	McLaren	4
15	C.Klien	Red Bull	3
16	F.Massa	Sauber	2
17	V.Liuzzi	Red Bull	1
18	C.Albers	Minardi	0
=18	J.Button	BAR	0
=18	A.Davidson	BAR	0
=18	P.Friesacher	Minardi	0
=18	N.Karthikeyan	Jordan	0
=18	T.Monteiro	Jordan	0
=18	T.Sato	BAR	0

Constructors

Rank	Team	Points
1	Renault	63
2	McLaren	51
3	Toyota	43
4	Williams	35
5	Ferrari	21
6	Red Bull	14
7	Sauber	7

A Lap of the Nurbengring

Coming out of the deceptively fast Coca-Cola Curve (supposedly 70mph in 2nd gear but usually in 3rd or even 4th a hell of a lot faster!) you accelerate down the start/finish straight with the pits on your right. In 1996 Villeneuve managed a great overtaking move

on Michael Schumacher when Schuey got held up by a Minardi. You drop down slightly as you pass under the hoarding descending into the new complex which replaces the infamous Castrol S (the old Castrol S was where a number of start line accidents occurred — the most amusing being Ralf managing to take both his team mate and his brother out in 1997!).

Instead of a simple S you have to break hard for a tight right hander which leads into two left hand turns before a right hander gets you back on the old track again. This section (known as the Mercedes Arena) will be entertaining to watch though there seems little doubt that a few cars will come to grief there during the race. The other effect of this new section will be to increase downforce levels to similar levels as those seen at Hungary or Monaco. Whether this new complex makes startline accidents less likely is open to dispute as breaking harder at the first turn merely means that there will be more cars aiming for the same spot of tarmac going into the corner.

You then accelerate down a short straight (if you look behind the cars here you can see the enormous Mercedes stand) you then sweep round to the left before the right hand Ford Curve. This is taken at 110mph in 3rd gear. Dropping down the hill you approach the Dunlop Curve. This looks something like a goldfish bowl as it is a hairpin surrounded by grandstands and is taken at about 50mph in 2nd gear. Accelerating back up the hill you drop down a gear for a left hander before accelerating down another straight before braking for the RTL Curve. This is quite a tight left hander and is taken at just under 100mph in 3rd gear. It was here that Damon Hill spun off in 1995 ending any chance of his winning the driver's championship that year and also fracturing his leg. You have a short straight before braking down for the Bit Curve. This is a virtual mirror image of the previous corner so is also taken at 95mph in 3rd gear. You then have a lovely long straight (with a slight right hand kink called the ITT Bogen before braking hard for the Veedol chicane. This is a tight chicane and also the best overtaking point on the track and there is always a coming together there at some stage during the race! It is taken at 100mph in 3rd gear. You then accelerate back up to 5th gear before braking for the Coca-Cola Curve and emerging back onto the start/finish straight.

Strategy

Two stoppers seem to do well here and the advantages in qualifying make this a certain. Problems with tire wear during the race in Monaco may lead to less teams filling their cars full of fuel as this seems to knacker the tire quite quickly.

The Teams

Ferrari

(Red with Marlboro signs)

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

Appalling speed and more tire wear problems at Monaco have left the Scuderia again playing catch up after Bridgestone again promised to get the red cars back to the sharp

end of the grid. Ferrari's problems certainly go beyond just their tires and a level of how serious the situation is at Ferrari was Schumi's muscular overtaking moves in the final lap at Monaco. Aside from infuriating both his brother and his team mate this needless scramble for seventh place shows just how desperate Ferrari are going in to Schumacher's home event.

BAR

(White with Red Lucky Strike Roundels on it)

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

After five weeks and two races away from the sport the BARs are back in Europe with a new fuel system and a much improved BAR005. BAR were hoping to produce strong performances in Spain and Monaco while the loss of sponsorship for these events have cost the team at least \$6million. With Button set to go to Williams if he has not secured 70% of the championship leader's points by the end of August BAR will know that they will have to produce something spectacular if they are not to suffer.

Renault

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

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

How the mighty have fallen. Renault seemed to be a whisker behind McLaren in Spain and in qualifying for Monaco. Come the race and Renault seemed to flounder. Heavy fuel loads and some pretty on the limit driving left the cars floundering come the end of the race. That said Alonso is still twenty-two points ahead of Raikkonen and the team are bringing a new aerodynamic package to Germany so Alonso is sure to want to spoil McLaren's party.

Williams

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

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

A fantastic result in Monaco saw both drivers on the podium. It has been a difficult few weeks for the team with rumors abounding regarding BMW's buying Sauber. Mark Webber claimed to be unhappy with his first podium finish and this may have in part been because he was comprehensively outperformed by Nick Heidfeld (whose overtaking move on Alonso was beautifully elegant unlike Webber's bumper cars!). With Heidfeld only one point behind Webber it does seem strange that Williams should be looking purely at replacing Heidfeld when he seems the more talented performer.

McLaren

(Gray with West signs on it)

9. **Montoya**

10. **Raikkonen**

The fastest car around the streets of Monte Carlo was also one of the kindest on its tires. McLaren have really produced a winning package and Raikkonen's recent races have moved him into contention for the championship. After a poor run in Spain (caused in part by his shoulder still being a bit dodgy), Montoya faced a raft of criticism in Monaco after he was judged to have caused a four car pile up. Starting from the back of the grid Montoya showed his class by not getting frustrated in traffic but instead forcing himself through the field to finish a creditable fifth. One or other silver arrows must be in contention for the win this weekend.

Sauber

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

11. **Villeneuve**

12. **Massa**

Summoned to Hinwil after the race in Monaco, both driver's were read the riot act following their coming together in the race. Somehow Villeneuve escaped punishment but the team will be smarting from the loss of a certain 5 points and the millions of dollars that this will have cost them. The good news for Sauber is that the team is looking better in terms of outright pace. Massa and Villeneuve seem evenly matched and the switch to Michelin rubber was clearly a good thing. The car is working well and the team must be hoping for good things at the Nurburgring even though their previous race ended in disappointment.

Toyota

(Red & White with Toyota & Panasonic logos)

14. **R Schumacher**

15. **Trulli**

An entertaining crash by Ralf in practice was followed by a pretty disappointing race pace. The Toyotas have occasionally flattered to deceive this year and it seems clear that this is a car that can be tricky to set up. The Nurburgring is the closest track to Toyota's factory in Cologne so there will be plenty of support from the factory staff who are expected to turn up en masse. Both Trulli and Ralf have raced here in their junior careers and Ralf won here three years ago in Formula 1. The team will have high hopes this weekend.

Red Bull Racing

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

16. **Coulthard**

17. **Liuzzi**

Following Red Bull' move to Ferrari next season it looks likely that the team will be on Bridgestone tires from next season as well. There is no doubt that Ferrari have suffered in not having any comparable data with which to test so it seems beneficial for the both teams to have such a close relationship. Before then the team have the rest of this season to contend with. Surprisingly Vittorantonio Liuzzi will continue to partner Coulthard in Germany despite this being the closest thing to a home race that Christian Klein can enjoy! Klein will be back for Canada but this is not much succour now! The Star Wars theme at the Monaco Grand Prix ensured the team enjoyed plenty of exposure but Coulthard seemed ill at ease with it and it seems clear that DC is enjoying a return to proper racing this weekend.

Midland Jordan

(Yellow with Sobraine on it)

18. **Karthekeinan**

19. **Monteiro**

Being beaten at Monaco by the Minardis was a bitter pill to swallow for the team and the situation was not made any easier by persistent rumours that the team was about to be sold to former driver Eddie Irvine. Irvine has always been a shrewd businessman and he is now ranked as one of the most independently wealthy sportsmen on the planet. Irvine is said to have accumulated a consortium of businessmen to take over the team and will take control over the summer. One look at Alain Prost's take-over of Ligier in 1996 and it is clear to see how former drivers do not always make the best managers. When you also consider how pleased Jaguar were to get rid of Irvine and one can only hope that this does not happen.

Minardi

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

20. **Leinders**

21. **Freidsecher**

Minardi's decision to design and introduce the PS05 was brave to say the least. Their steadily improving performances have more than justified this decision and, given that the team seem to be getting more and more familiar with the car, it seems likely that the Minardis will again be in front of the Jordans this weekend. Minardi almost scored a podium result here in 1999 and, although it seems unlikely that they will get close to that this weekend, an 11th place finish ahead of BAR will see them climb from last in the constructor's standings.

Alex's 2005 European Grand Prix Predictions

Qualifying	Race
1. Kimi Raikkonen	1. Kimi Raikkonen
2. Fernando Alonso	2. Jenson Button
3. Jenson Button	3. Fernando Alonso

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