

2005 F1 Season

Italian Grand Prix Preview

Round 15 of 19

By Alex "Zander" Keep

Circuit Name: Monza
Circuit Length: 3.580 miles
Lap Record: Michael Schumacher, 1m21.832s
Number of Laps: 53 (189.74 miles)

A Lap of Monza

You barrel through the start/finish straight (at about 210mph) and brake down for what was the Variante Goodyear. This has been altered this year and had its name changed to the Retifilo Tribune. Instead of two chicanes a single very slow right/left chicane is there with enormous curbs! This is to combat the enormous amount of straight lining that used to go on here. In 96 they tried putting barriers here and they broke apart in the race after having caused Hill go off while leading and having damaged both Villeneuve and Schumacher's suspension. The drivers have complained about this new layout and there is likely to be the usual first lap carnage here but it is a bit late for anyone to do anything about it. In 1994 Eddie Irvine effectively sealed Lotus' demise from Formula 1 by ramming into the back of Johnny Herbert (who had qualified an excellent 4th) here and in 1999 Hakkinen famously spun out here leading to him sobbing behind a bush — unaware that it was all being filmed by the helicopter overhead!

The drivers accelerate away around the Curva Grande which is taken flat out before a quick 2nd gear left/right chicane called Variante della Roggia. This was the scene of the enormous crash in 2000 which claimed the life of Paolo Ghislimberti — a marshal who was standing in an unsafe area of the track and got hit by a wheel. This is normally taken in 2nd gear at about 70mph and was the site of Hill and Schumacher's collision in 1995.

The track then sweeps around to the right in a bend that is taken in 3rd gear at just over 100mph (the First Lesmo) and then Lesmo 2 is taken in third at about 95mph.

There is then a long straight with a slight right hand kink (the Curva del Serraglio) as the track drops downhill under a Marlboro hoarded bridge before climbing back up towards the Curva del Vialone and Variante Ascari. These are a series of bends comprising of a 3rd gear 95 mph left hander followed by a 4th gear 110mph right hander and then you floor it through the 135mph 4th gear right hander to get as much speed as possible

down the straight heading towards the infamous Parabolica — a long 180 degree turn that is entered in 3rd and slowly opens up to lead onto the start/finish straight.

Alex Wurz's View:

"Starting a lap of Monza, you power up through the gears along the wide Rettifilio Tribune straight reaching the top speed of all the circuits on the calendar, 218mph / 350km/h in seventh gear. The right-left Rettifilio Chicane is located at the end of the straight and sees your speed drop as you brake dramatically to 71mph / 115km/h in second. As you exit, you immediately reach the Curva Grande. This long, bumpy right-hander is taken flat out and your speed increases to some 181mph / 290km/h in sixth before arriving to the Variante dello Roggia.

You brake from some 200mph / 335km/h in sixth to 71mph / 115km/h to negotiate the left-right chicane, which has a tricky entry as it is very bumpy and slippery. Another short straight follows and takes you to the double apex right hander of Curva di Lesmos. You enter the first turn at 104mph / 168km/h in third. A quick burst of acceleration sees your speed increase up to 140mph or 225km/h before you then brake for the second apex, which is negotiated at 94mph / 150km/h also in third.

It is important to maintain a good speed through Lesmos, as it takes you onto a long straight, which has a slight left curve. You reach 212mph / 340km/h in seventh as you blast towards the Curva del Vialone. Another hard braking zone takes your speed down to 90mph / 145km/h in third to negotiate the left hander, the entry of the famous Ascari chicane, which is immediately followed by right-hander leading into the next left hand corner. This is quite an exiting section of corners, which then flicks you onto the back straight, achieving speeds of 212mph / 340km/h in seventh gear as you approach the famous Parabolica.

The tight entrance to this long sweeping right hander is taken at some 100mph / 160km/h and as the curve opens out your speed increases and you are swung back onto the start-finish straight to begin another lap."

The Track

Monza used to be an over and under circuit with a banked area similar to that seen in the US CART series (the banked oval section is on the bridge under which the cars travel about 2/3rds of the way around today's lap) but over the years this has been changed to the more familiar layout used today. It boasts some of the highest average speeds on the calendar and is a combination of 2nd gear chicanes, long straights and some sweeping bends. The change to the regulations has eliminated the slipstreaming (following close behind a car to lessen wind resistance) that used to be such a factor here. In addition the lack of mechanical grip coupled to the close grid this year will lead to it being very difficult to pass opponents this time around. (In 97 the race was notable because not one passing move took place — the only attempt was by Ralfy on Herbert which took them both off quite spectacularly). The drivers market is more or less settled in the major teams this year and there are unlikely to be many announcements this weekend.

The Track's F1 History

This is the 55th grand prix to be held at Monza and there are few places where the emotion of grand prix racing is more evident. In recent years emotion has been more important here than racing as the racing itself can be quite dull! Last year Ruben Barrichello scored a dominant win taking pole position and fastest lap along the way. Michael Schumacher tangled on the first lap but fought back brilliantly to take second while Jenson Button again ended up on the podium in third.

In 2003 year a dull race was spiced up by the closeness in the title chase and the fact that Ferrari had shown itself to be woefully off the pace in Hungary. Michael Schumacher put himself back into contention for the title with a romp home ahead of Montoya's Williams with Barrichello confirming Ferrari's renaissance with a fine third. Kimi Raikkonen reminded everyone of his still being in the title chase with 4th ahead of Marc Gené who drove a fabulous race for Williams depressing for Ralf Schumacher who put his back out. Villeneuve, Webber and Alonso rounded out the top 8.

In 2002 the Ferraris return home was for a glorious homecoming that was marred only by the fact that Ferrari had succeeded in the championship so easily that even the Tifosi were staying away in their masses. In the end Rubens Barrichello again took glory in his quest to secure runner up in the standings. Michael was second after an easy romp to the flag and Eddie Irvine produced the surprise of the season by taking a decent third in his Jaguar.

In 2001 the events of September 11th cast a shadow over the race. Several teams decided to run partially in black while Ferrari made the laudable decision to run without sponsor's logos and with black noses for the weekend. Schumacher was in lackluster form and the news over the weekend that Alex Zanardi had had a huge crash at the Lausitzring in Germany sent further shockwaves through the sport. In the end Sunday was a good race with Montoya winning his first race.

2000's race was overshadowed by the death of a marshal as an accident between the two Jordans of Frentzen and Trulli led to a monumental pile up at Variante della Roggia. Schumacher ended up winning pretty easily to start the run of wins that would net him and the team the driver's and constructor's titles.

In 1999 Hakkinen was looking set for an easy win when he spun off at the first chicane handing an unexpected victory to Frentzen in the Jordan. Before that Hakkinen managed to lead to about 50 yards when Coulthard blew up in front of him and Schumacher capitalized on Hakkinen's avoiding action to get past the Finn.

In 1997 a thoroughly dull race saw Coulthard win with very few overtaking moves indeed while in 1996 the field was wiped out by some bolted tires at the first chicane.

In 1995 Johnny Herbert won after Hill crashed into Schumacher as they lapped Inoue's Arrows at the second chicane (Inoue escaped the carnage!) while Hill won here in 1994 after the on board cameras managed to wipe out both Ferraris! (The camera fell off Alesi's car and hit Berger's on one of the straights!)

2004 Italian Grand Prix Results

Position	Driver	Team	Engine	Laps	Time	Delay/ Retirement
1	Rubens Barrichello	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	53	1:15'18.448	
2	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	53	1:15'19.795	1.347
3	Jenson Button	BAR	Honda V10	53	1:15'28.645	10.197
4	Takuma Sato	BAR	Honda V10	53	1:15'33.818	15.370
5	Juan Pablo Montoya	Williams	BMW V10	53	1:15'50.800	32.352
6	David Coulthard	McLaren	Mercedes V10	53	1:15'51.887	33.439
7	Antonio Pizzonia	Williams	BMW V10	53	1:15'52.200	33.752
8	G.Fisichella	Sauber	Petronas V10	53	1:15'53.879	35.431

Championship Standings

Drivers			
Rank	Driver	Team	Points
1	F. Alonso	Renault	95
2	K.Raikkonen	McLaren-Mercedes	71
3	M.Schumacher	Ferrari	55
4	Juan Pablo Montoya	McLaren-Mercedes	40
5	J.Trulli	Toyota	39
6	Giancarlo Fisichella	Renault	35
7	Ralf Schumacher	Toyota	32
8	R.Barrichello	Ferrari	31
9	Nick Heidfeld	Williams-BMW	28
10	Mark Webber	Williams-BMW	24
11	Jenson Button	BAR-Honda	23
12	David Coulthard	Red Bull	21
13	Felipe Massa	Sauber-Petronas	8
14	Tiago Monteiro	Jordan	6
15	Alexander Wurz	McLaren-Mercedes	6
16	Jacques Villeneuve	Sauber-Petronas	6
17	Narain Karthikeyan	Jordan	5
18	Christian Klien	Red Bull	5
19	Pedro de la Rosa	McLaren-Mercede	4
20	Christijan Albers	Minardi	4
21	Patrick Friesacher	Minardi	3
22	Takuma Sato	BAR-Honda	1
23	Vitantonio Liuzzi	Red Bull	1

2005 Constructors' Championship

Pos	Constructor	Points
1	Renault	130
2	McLaren Mercedes	121
3	Ferrari	86
4	Toyota	71
5	Williams-BMW	52
6	Red Bull	27
7	BAR-Honda	24
8	Sauber	14
9	Jordan	11
10	Minardi	7

Strategy

For Monza, the long pitlane and high average lap speed has always meant that strategy has been to fill the car up as full as it will go and then make one stop as late as possible! The refined qualifying procedures for this year makes two stops a credible alternative and tire wear, though normally less than at other tracks, could be a factor due to the high speeds and braking loads.

The Teams

Ferrari

(Red with Marlboro signs)

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

How the mighty have fallen! A dominant performance by Ferrari last year while this year they will struggle to get into the points! Losing Barrichello to BAR in exchange for Felipe Massa seems a blind decision and Ferrari will be struggling to have two competitive cars next year. Bridgestone are looking to supply more teams next year and this will help Ferrari in getting their cars on more of an even track as the Michelin teams. Although tires are not as crucial in getting a good time around Monza as at other tracks the F2005 is not as an effective or well balanced a car as the other leading teams this year and this will rule Ferrari out of challenging for the lead in front of their Tifosi.

BAR

(White with Red Lucky Strike Roundels on it)

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

Honda's engine program is continuing in leaps and bounds with the company planning on introducing a Suzuka special for the Japanese Grand Prix with 1000hp on tap for the final two rounds. On this power circuit the team must be looking to score well even though they won't have the ultimate version of their engine to use. Reliability will be the main concern for the team as the engines are at full power for 80% of the lap. Button's saga looks unlikely to be resolved before the end of the season. Williams are asking to \$50 million to release him yet BAR are not inclined to front up this cash (particularly as they have Rubens Barrichello for the next two years now).

Renault

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

5. Fisichella
6. Alonso

A little like Damon Hill's championship season in 1996 Fernando Alonso is merely trying to finish in a halfway decent manner to ensure his championship. The Renault is not as quick as the McLaren and is harder on its tires. That said the Renault is clearly the second fastest car out there and the team are still leading the constructor's championship so the team are clearly in contention for both titles. Fisichella seems to be under a great deal of pressure from outside the team yet the team insists that they are happy with his performances and instead are apologizing for the Italian's appalling luck. Hopefully Fisi will be able to show his ability and claim another win this season.

Williams

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

7. Webber
8. Heidfeld

Gavin Fisher seems to have been made the latest scapegoat for Williams' poor form this season. Although his replacement has a great name (Jorg ZANDER!) it is yet to be seen that his arrival will signal a turnaround for the team. With Geoff Willis already at BAR it seems likely that the team of Fisher and Willis may well be reunited to BAR's gain. The team have gotten to the bottom of why both drivers retired in Turkey (the inside of the tire was flexing and rubbing against the bodywork) and modifications have been made. Both BMW & Williams are hoping to end their relationship strongly yet this seems most unlikely!

McLaren

(Gray with West signs on it)

9. Montoya
10. Raikkonen

Another win in Turkey for Kimi and he is clearly looking like a title contender even if the gap may be too much for this year. The McLaren is easily the fastest car out there at the

moment and, subject to the team not making any silly mistakes over the winter, it seems likely that the MP4/21 will be the fastest again next year. Bridgestone are in talks about supplying the team next season yet it seems strange for the team to want to change from their current winning formula and this may just be rivals mischief making. Talking of mischief making McLaren have been making a fuss to the FIA over Renault's apparent use of team orders in allowing Fisichella to move over for Alonso. As the team never instructed Fisi it is impossible to say that team orders were employed and therefore it is more a fact that McLaren know that they will have to pull something out of the bag to win drivers and constructors titles this year.

Sauber

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

11. Villeneuve

12. Massa

Massa was first to retire in Turkey after a silly first corner coming together with the Red Bulls. In contrast to his team mate Villeneuve is beginning to remind us that he used to be a halfway decent racing driver. Aside from a lurid spin in Turn 8 in qualifying Villeneuve's race was pretty accomplished and BMW have reflected this better form by not questioning Sauber's current contract with the Canadian. Sauber may well outperform Ferrari at Monza this year and there is little doubt that the team will be a force to be reckoned with by 2007.

Toyota

(Red & White with Toyota & Panasonic logos)

14. R Schumacher

15. Trulli

Although there is no doubt that Toyota have had a less impressive second half of the season both drivers are performing more evenly and, in particular, Ralf Schumacher is beginning to step up to the mark. Even so doubts must remain over whether either driver could truly be a championship contender and push the team to the maximum of its ability (Trulli is too nice and Ralf is too introverted). The team need a stronger character to base them around and until that happens it is difficult to see Toyota as anything other than also rans.

Red Bull Racing

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

16. Coulthard

17. Klein

Picking up points where others fall off the track Red Bull are continuing to make steady progress. Scot Speed has been announced as the team's third driver for next year leaving just one seat left for either Christian Klein or Vitorantonio Liuzzi. At the moment

the smart money seems to be on Klein getting it. He has pushed Coulthard more in the races and the management has given him more races this season. Liuzzi looks set to race for another team but with the prime seats drying up, this looks like it may well be either Midland or Minardi. The team may well find themselves hobbled by poor straight-line speed this weekend and therefore will be doing well to compete with the Saubres, Toyotas and Williams.

Midland Jordan

(Yellow with Sobraine on it)

18. **Karthekeinan**

19. **Monteiro**

Christian Kolles has reaffirmed the Midland Group's commitment to F1 while at the same time admitting that the team have been in discussions with parties interesting in buying the team out - that is a little like claiming fidelity while renting a hotel room! The team are finally introducing the EJ15B at Monza though they will only have one car available. The fact that it will be made available to Monteiro shows how Karthekeinan has fallen from favour. It looks likely that it will be all change on the driver front next year.

Minardi

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

20. **Leinders**

21. **Doornbos**

For the first time in Minardi's history the team is looking to retain both drivers for next year. Of course should Liuzzi come available with a hefty slice of Red Bull backing this situation may well change but the team seems happy with both their drivers. Minardi are currently outpacing Jordan and catching several other larger teams so the future is looking good for the paddock minnows. Whether they can keep this form next year is another matter entirely but if I were Paul Stoddart I would be inquiring from Cosworth about changing to their V8s next season rather than running restricted V10s as they are currently planning!

Alex's 2005 Italian Grand Prix Predictions

Qualifying	Race
1. Juan Pablo Montoya	1. Kimi Raikkonen
2. Kimi Raikkonen	2. Juan Pablo Montoya
3. Jenson Button	3. Jenson Button