

## 2005 F1 Season

# Grand Prix Preview Spain

## Circuito di Catalunya - Round 5 of 19

### Barcelona, Spain

By Alex "Zander" Keep

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**Circuit Name:** Barcelona  
**Circuit Length:** 4.728km  
**Race Length:** 65 laps  
**Lap Record:** Rubens Barrichello 1m20.143s

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### Fernando Alonso's View

*"We were certainly slower than Ferrari in Imola, even if we don't know for definite the reasons why, and the whole team has been working very hard to push even more for Barcelona. But I think that Ferrari found very special conditions in San Marino that worked perfectly for them: it is not normal for one car to be so fast compared to every other car in the field, not just ours. Certainly, we are not now fighting the same Ferrari team we saw at the first three races, but I don't think we will be facing the same strength as in Imola either. Hopefully things will be tougher for them this weekend. If you look at the results, a Renault has won the first four races of the season, so everything is still there to fight for. Historically, Barcelona has been a much better circuit for the team than Imola, so we have to be confident for this race. But the other teams are very quick, and we all test there so everybody knows the circuit. I think the competition will be very close, even more than we saw in Bahrain or Imola."*

### Jenson Button's View

*"Barcelona is a circuit which I have always enjoyed driving at. It's very fast flowing and seems to be a race that we have always done well at. Following our test there at the beginning of April, I hold the unofficial lap record so the car is obviously in good form. We've been testing in Mugello this week, which is a similar type of circuit to Barcelona in that they are both very fast. We've been quick in testing so are positive that the team can go to Barcelona next weekend and get a good result."*

### Last Year's Results

Position	No	Driver	Team	Engine	Time	Laps	Delay/ Retirement
1	1	Michael Schumacher	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	1h27m32.841s	66	
2	2	Rubens Barrichello	Ferrari	Ferrari V10	1h27m46.131s	66	13.290

3	7	Jarno Trulli	Renault	Renault V10	1h28m05.135s	66	32.294
4	8	Fernando Alonso	Renault	Renault V10	1h28m05.793s	66	32.952
5	10	Takuma Sato	BAR	Honda V10	1h28m15.168s	66	42.327
6	4	Ralf Schumacher	Williams	BMW V10	1h28m46.645s	66	1'13.804
7	11	G.Fisichella	Sauber	Renault	1h28m49.949s	66	1'17.108
8	9	Jenson Button	BAR	Honda V10	1h27m40.536s	65	1 Lap

## Last race

Since the track was emasculated with chicanes, Imola has always been a race more endured than enjoyed. The problems in passing have meant that races have often been more about tactics than skill. Not two weeks ago! Despite one of the most frustrating ad breaks ever (what ITV thought they were playing at is anyone's guess) the final laps were some of the best in recent grand prix history. Schumacher's Ferrari bobbing and weaving behind Alonso's Renault while Fernando not only kept Schumi behind him but also kept himself away from Liuzzi's Red Bull meaning he didn't have to undertake a potentially dangerous bit of lapping. Alonso proved he is a champion in the making. It was good to see Jenson Button and BAR back on the podium though their result was later thrown into doubt following the discovery of a second fuel tank.

## Championship Standings

Rank	Driver	Team	Points
1	F.Alonso	Renault	36
2	J.Trulli	Toyota	18
3	G.Fisichella	Renault	10
4	M.Schumacher	Ferrari	10
5	D.Coulthard	Red Bull	9
6	R.Schumacher	Toyota	9
7	R.Barrichello	Ferrari	8
8	J.Montoya	McLaren	8
9	N.Heidfeld	Williams	7
10	K.Raikkonen	McLaren	7
11	M.Webber	Williams	7
12	J.Button	BAR	6
13	A.Wurz	McLaren	5
14	P.de la Rosa	McLaren	4
15	T.Sato	BAR	4
16	C.Klien	Red Bull	3
17	J.Villeneuve	Sauber	3
18	F.Massa	Sauber	2
19	C.Albers	Minardi	0
=19	A.Davidson	BAR	0
=19	P.Friesacher	Minardi	0
=19	N.Karthikeyan	Jordan	0
=19	V.Liuzzi	Red Bull	0
=19	T.Monteiro	Jordan	0

## Constructors

Rank	Team	Points
1	Renault	46
2	Toyota	27
3	McLaren	24
4	Ferrari	18
5	Williams	14
6	Red Bull	12
7	BAR	10
8	Sauber	5

## The Track

Barcelona is the main winter testing track for most of the major teams. It is relatively warm, dry & predictable & the track tests aerodynamics more than most. The main result of this is that races here have a habit of being incredibly boring as each car cannot get close enough to the car in front to allow it to pass. 1999's race was a prime example of the genre & resulted in the FIA having to address the problem of making overtaking easier. The best way to watch this race (other than seeing the highlights!) is to go to the pub for a decent lunch first & then you can always doze off if the race turns into a snorathon! That said it is possible to overtake here (Damon Hill managed it on Barrichello in 1999 & Schuey's stitching up of his brother in 2000 was a laugh - also the last couple of races have been a little closer!). One of the greatest overtaking moves ever was performed here in 1991 when Mansell diced with Senna on the main straight at over 190mph.

## A Lap Of The Track

You exit the last corner (called New Holland) in 5th gear at around 140mph & accelerate up along the straight & over the start/finish line. Passing under the EXPO advert you brake down to 3rd gear & 75mph for the right hander called Elf. You then sweep left accelerating uphill & then feathering the throttle as you take the long right hand curve called Curvon Renault. This is taken at 135mph in 5th before a very short straight where you can get up to 6th gear & 170mph before braking down to 75mph & 3rd gear for Repsol. This is another right hander which leads downhill briefly accelerating up to 150mph in 5th before braking down to 55mph in 2nd for the left hand SEAT corner. You then accelerate again & bottom out sweeping left before the mid speed Wurth corner which is a left hander taken in 3rd at about 80mph. You then need to correct the car on the exit before blasting up towards Campsa which is a right hander taken at 120 mph in 5th gear. A straight then follows before the long (170 degree) left hander called La Caixa which is another 2nd gear corner taken at about 60mph. The left hander almost leads back onto itself before turning right at the 75mph 3rd gear Banc Sadadell. You then accelerate into a right hander, taken at around 135mph in 5th gear & then up to the 6th gear right hander New Holland taken at around 140mph & the key to a good lap time as this leads on to the mile long start/finish straight.

## Barcelona in GTR

Rather than use an F1 car this time I thought I would try the track in a Lotus Elise from the excellent GTR game. If you have not got this sim yet please get it - it is the Half Life of motor racing sims! I chose the Elise because it has the same engine and many of the same handling characteristics as my Toyota MRS. Heading down the main straight the similarity with my Toyota immediately becomes apparent as I hear the engine over revving and immediately wish the car had a 6th gear! I brake early

for the first right hander (Elf), the early turn in allowing for a better line through the second (left hand) part of the S bend. Accelerating hard through the gears as we swing upwards and through the sweeping right hand 3rd corner (Renault) a bit of clever driving is required not to end up feathering the throttle (and destabilising the car) or lifting off and finding yourself down on power and a sitting duck at the end of the short straight that follows as you turn into the 4th corner, a tighter right hander. The following tight left hander (Repsol) comes up almost immediately. I drop back down the gears and contain the back end trying to step out with a dab of power and a touch of opposite lock before accelerating hard in a more sweeping left hand curve before braking down to second for the tight left hander. I again climb, accelerating round to the right through Campsa and over a blind brow, clipping the bollards as I try to maximise my speed down the second longest straight on the track. I brake late into the following left hand corner (La Caixa), again shifting down to second but being careful not to let the revs drop too much. A hard jab on the power slides the car into the right approach for the tighter right hander and I approach the final two right handers knowing I have to do little more than hang on. I shoot through the first of the right handers still accelerating and aim at the outer side of the pit wall for the last bend, glad that I am not doing this for real as I am reminded of images of Andrea Montermini's shattered Simtek. I accelerate hard again seeing the grandstands on my left and pits on my right as I fly into another lap.

## Past Races

As mentioned the past races have normally been about as exciting as a one of Tony Jardine's post race analyses! The first race at Barcelona was held in 1991 & Mansell had a fantastic passing move on Senna which was then added to when the pair had a bit of fuss after the race. Since then the reliance of aerodynamics made subsequent races truly mind numbing until 1994 when Damon Hill managed to give the Williams team a great result after the death of Senna two races before. For much of the race Schumacher's Benetton was stuck in 5th gear yet he managed to adapt his driving to finish second (recording the fastest lap of the race in the process). In 1995 Benetton finished with a 1-2 after a poor start to the season. This set the scene for a dominant rest of the season. In 1996 Schumacher won the rain soaked race by a country mile. In 1996 Hill won again in the dominant Williams & then Villeneuve won in the dominant Williams the next year (both truly dull races!). In 1998 & last 1999 Hakkinen won in the aerodynamically superior McLarens (anyone picking up a pattern here?!) in two more dull races. In 2000 Hakkinen made it a hat trick at this circuit but the center of attention was David Coulthard who drove to a strong second place, just 10 days after he was involved in a plane crash in which his two pilots were killed. In 2001 the race was where the electronics that had been banned since 1993 were reintroduced. Despite numerous rumors of teams running these in the intervening years it was clear that their reintroduction was far from smooth with several cars stuck on the grid as their traction control systems failed as the lights went out at the start. Mika Hakkinen looked set for a dominant victory until his clutch gave out with half a lap to go providing Michael Schumacher with an easy win while Montoya recorded his first finish with second place and Jacques Villeneuve scored BAR's first podium with third place. 2002 was a Ferrari walkover for Schumacher while poor Rubens Barrichello was upset not to even make the start. Renault showed good form but the main talking point over the race weekend was the way in which rear wings kept flying off cars throughout the various sessions leading to a major accident for Raikkonen and preventing Minardi from taking part. In 2003 the weekend was all about Alonso. Renault had had to pay Spanish TV to continue broadcasting Formula 1 before the season started but this changed completely in Barcelona. Alonso qualified second and there was a real hope that he would win his first race that day. With a new sporting hero to believe in the Spanish finally started to watch grand prix racing (a sport they had traditionally snubbed in favor of rallying and motor bike racing) and the grandstands were full of Alonso fans all waving their blue and yellow flags enthusiastically. In the end Alonso had to cede to Schumacher but he still drove out of his skin to claim second place while Rubens completed the podium ahead of the two Williamses. Last year the race was all about Ferrari. Schumacher and Barrichello disappeared into the distance while Alonso and Trulli were left to fight it out for the final podium place. Behind them the BARs, Williamses and Saubers all

looked respectable while McLaren produced what could only be described as an embarrassing display looking underpowered and out of balance all weekend.

## Strategy

Barcelona is an ultra smooth track with a long pitlane. Because passing is so difficult on this track it is likely that teams will try to be flexible with their strategies. A lucky qualifying position will see a good driver in a slow car hold up much faster cars throughout the early part of the race. Being forced to follow cars in front can put much more stress on components & the number of retirements can be quite high. Tires take a battering through the long corners here so we may see some serious wear problems later in the race. Both tire companies have tested extensively here but Ferrari's reduced running outside of Fiorano under the new regulations could see it struggle here.

## The Teams

### Ferrari

*(Red with Marlboro signs)*

1. M. Schumacher
2. Barrichello

With easily the fastest car on the track at Imola it was only Michael Schumacher's mistake in qualifying that prevented him from scoring a famous victory in Italy. The Ferrari and its Bridgestone tires are easily a match for the Michelin's (though their lack of running around Barcelona in the off season could prove a weakness) and Ferrari's policy of going it alone regarding their testing the week before a grand prix, while morally reprehensible, is getting them results on the track. Whether it is winning them any friends is another point entirely. With Michael back on form there is no doubt that Rubens' brief period in the sun is over and he is sure to struggle again relative to his better equipped team leader..

### BAR

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

3. Button
4. Sato

With the threat of being thrown out of the championship hanging in the air uneasily as this is being written and quotes coming out of the FIA and from BAR sounding more like those associated with WWE wrestling than Formula 1 it has to be said that the FIA have really made fools of themselves this time around! BAR used fuel as ballast throughout the Imola grand prix weekend by using a second tank to pressurize the fuel entering the engine. It seems highly unlikely that BAR and Honda will be found against and banned from the championship as it would require Honda, one of Formula 1's biggest spenders and most successful companies, to walk away from the sport. Why the FIA are pursuing this is difficult to comprehend.

### Renault

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

5. Fisichella
6. Alonso

Alonso's fight with Michael Schumacher showed just what a great driver the team have in their young Spaniard. Alonso's drive showed that he could dictate pace without losing concentration or allowing the German the faintest sniff of a passing opportunity - a truly fantastic drive. Spain should be a great race for the Spaniard. Formula 1 is said to be more popular than football in Spain right now and Renault are sure to be good around the turns of Barcelona so the team should perform better than in Imola. More worrying for the team has been the run of bad luck and poor reliability that has been blighting Fisichella. All the team need is for some of this to rub off on Alonso and his lead in the championship will suddenly look very precarious.

### **Williams**

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

7. **Webber**

8. **Heidfeld**

After being heavily lauded prior to joining the team, Mark Webber has been made to look pretty ordinary on occasion by his last minute stand-in team mate. Webber really needs to start imposing his authority on the team if he wants to be a credible team leader. By contrast Nick Heidfeld must be having the time of his life! Frustrated at Sauber and woefully slow in last year's dire Jordan, Nick's salvation by Williams has rescued his GP career. A backroom reshuffle of personnel is likely to help and it is possible that Heidfeld will end up the more successful driver at the end of the season.

### **McLaren**

*(Grey with West signs on it)*

9. **Montoya**

10. **Raikkonen**

The big news for the Woking boys is the reappearance of Juan Pablo Montoya. Six weeks of rehabilitating should see the Colombian in fine fettle in Spain. More to the point the car is going beginning to live up to its potential as the fastest thing on track (it is worth remembering that Raikkonen took pole and was busy disappearing into the distance when his driveshaft broke). Expect the team to be there or thereabouts this weekend.

### **Sauber**

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

11. **Villeneuve**

12. **Massa**

Some decent points on the board coupled with more aero modifications designed to stabilise the early season braking problems and the team are looking far more like their normal selves. Villeneuve in particular seems more at ease and there is little doubt that the team arrive in Barcelona on a relative crest of a wave. Reports that the team are about to be bought by BMW seems to still persist and it seems possible that Villeneuve will find himself in a true championship challenger next year.

### **Toyota**

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

14. **R. Schumacher**

15. **Trulli**

A little like Webber, Ralf Schumacher seems to be trailing in the wake of his cheaper and quicker team

mate. Trulli's performances have marked him out as one of the quickest drivers in the field while it seems only a matter of time before the team win their first race (mind you I am sure I said the same thing about BAR last year!). Even so, despite a relatively duff performance in Italy, there seems little doubt that the TF105 will be in the hunt in Spain.

### **Red Bull Racing**

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

16. **Coulthard**

17. **Liuzzi**

Unlike Toyota, Red Bull's downturn in performance looks more like the shape of things to come and less like a bad weekend. The team's modest budget was never going to allow them to run at the front for too long and it clearly was no more than just enough time to net the team brand new Ferrari engines for next year. Aside from the sporting aspect the marketing side for this link up is incredible. Red Bull and Ferrari will be side by side in every piece of press - not bad for a fizzy drink!

### **Midland Jordan**

*(Yellow with Sobraine on it)*

18. **Karthekeinan**

19. **Monteiro**

Despite Toyota engines and pretty handy drivers the shell that was the Jordan Formula 1 team lurches on before its metamorphosis into Midland Racing next year. The big struggle for the team will not be catching the midfield but in keeping ahead of the new Minardis. Despite having no more than a shake down performed on one of the cars the PS05s looked a lot better than the old cars. Jordan are still running last year's cars (albeit with Toyota engines and improved aerodynamics) and the lack of investment in improving the cars could see them struggle to keep from picking up the wooden spoon.

### **Minardi**

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

20. **Leinders**

21. **Freidsecher**

The perennial strugglers continue on. The new car, despite no development budget, looks a beaut and running the same engines as Red Bull won't hurt either. Only the handicap of having pay drivers is likely to hurt the team. Minardi often go better after they have been able to test and the three days spent at Mugello last week means that a more competitive outing can be expected this weekend.

### **Predictions**

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