

Preview

2004 Monaco Grand Prix

Round 6 of 18

by Alex "Zander" Keep



View from the Cockpit

I will be taking the course during the 2004 season using **EA's F1 Challenge '99-'02**. To make it more contemporary I will be applying Ralph Hummerich's excellent carset to it as soon as it is ready. I have chosen Ralph's carset as, in addition to him being a thoroughly top notch person, in my opinion his carsets are the best available and it is an honor for SimHQ to have an exclusive WIP version to be able to use for its screenshots. Many thanks Ralph! If you wish to try his 2003 add on please use [this link](#) to his page.



A Lap of Monaco

Going over the start/finish line you approach the first corner — a right hander called Saint Devote. There is usually some form of coming together at the start here. In 1994 Hakkinen punted Hill's Williams off on the first lap while the following year Alesi, Coulthard and Berger proved that it was impossible to get three cars around the same corner! Normally Ste Devote is taken in 2nd gear at about 55mph.

Accelerating up the hill you get up to just over 160mph in top gear before braking for Massenet. This left hander is taken at around 80mph in 3rd gear and is often a good chance to see how sideways the drivers can get the car before flicking the car right through Casino Square (taken a little slower — say 70mph).

You then accelerate down the hill (avoiding the manhole cover) up to 130mph before breaking again for Mirabeau. It was down this hill that Johnny Herbert did a masterful job of keeping his suspension (and himself) in one piece when

his suspension failed last year. Mirabeau is a tight right hander and is taken at about 50mph in 2nd.

You then briefly accelerate before the tightest corner on the calendar, the Lowes Hairpin (it was actually renamed a couple of years ago but everyone still calls it the Lowes Hairpin!). This corner is difficult to get around in a road car so is almost impossible to get around in a grand prix car. Ironically it is probably the best place to overtake on the circuit with Eddie Irvine managing to bare past (or through) someone there every year! It is a right hander taken at 30mph.

You carry on down the hill before the double right hander at Portier. Both of these are taken at about 50 mph and it is very easy to get it wrong here in the wet (as Schumacher did in 1996).

Coming out of Portier you accelerate into the tunnel. The tunnel is always a problem as the variation in light affects the driver when it is sunny and the dry track inside the tunnel can cause problems on a damp track. Either way it is the fastest part of the track and you can get up to 170mph before hitting the next braking zone.

This is for the Novelle Chicane. This was altered after Karl Wendlinger had a big accident there in his Sauber in 1994. It is a right/left and was the scene of Hill's overly ambitious overtaking more on Ralf Schumacher last year as well as Coulthard's engine failure in 1998 and Hill's in 1996.

After going through the chicane (which is taken at about 40mph in 2nd) you then race along the seafront. Despite being so close to the water, only two drivers have ended up going for a swim during the race and both were unharmed!

Braking into the next turn, Tabac, can be interesting as the track is usually slippery due to the fish shop washing their fish there during the rest of the year — I am not sure but I think this closed last year so the drivers may find extra grip this year! Tabac is one of the faster corners on the circuit and is taken at 90mph in 3rd gear.

You then accelerate again up around the swimming pool complex. This consists of a short straight, a left and right "kink" another short straight and a right and left "kink". The first braking zone can be interesting in the wet as it is over a zebra crossing!

You then accelerate back up to about 100mph before braking for Le Rascasse a very tight (about 35mph in 2nd) right hander that leads past the pit entrance and through a second right hander that leads back onto the main straight.

Race Name: Monaco Grand Prix

Circuit Name: Monte Carlo

Circuit Length: 2.08miles/3.340km

Race Length: 78 laps (260.520 Km)

Lap Record: Kimi Raikkonen 1m14.545s

Giancarlo Fisichella's View

"I consider the Monaco Grand Prix to be a home race. I have some wonderful memories tied to this great circuit, including my Italian Formula 3 Championship victory here in 1994 and also some satisfying performances in Formula One, for example second place in 2000. The circuit is difficult and elaborate, but it is also fun. The atmosphere is always charming, with the people who come here and also the city itself, with its location on the harbor, and all the boats that surround it."

Nick Heidfeld's View

"Monaco is one of my favorite circuits, along with Suzuka. It's a very special race, driving through the city, as it doesn't give you room for mistakes and on top of that it's a very special atmosphere every year. From the team's point of view, we probably have a better chance here than we had in the last couple of races because if you look at history, anything can happen in Monaco. We will try our best and see what happens."

Rubens Barrichello's View

"Monaco is bumpy and incredibly uncomfortable. Never a moment to rest and a constant workout for your arms and legs. A lap can be the biggest thrill of your life but also the bumpiest! Coming over the start line in top gear doing 270kph, you arrive at the braking area for Sainte Devote and the track suddenly narrows. This means that at the start of the race, the whole field gets funneled into the corner. It often means that there are accidents, but that's more of an incentive to start at the front. Carrying through as much speed and momentum as possible through St. Devote, you exit in second gear and blast up the hill."

"The hill is much steeper than it looks on television, but by the time it levels out, you are doing about 250kph in top gear before you select fourth and turn around the tricky left-handed Beau Rivage at over 200kph, which takes you into Casino Square. In the wet, you really have to be careful here, because it's a bit off camber and the track falls away from you. The barrier comes out a bit on the left as you leave — another thing to watch out for!"

"Coming into Casino Square, the car gets a bit light as you turn right in third gear down the hill, and there's a huge bump which sucks the car down and really unsettles you as you prepare to brake from 210kph for Mirabeau, the second gear right-hand hairpin. Onto the Grand Hotel hairpin; it is a lot harder than it looks because you are braking downhill and if you brake too late, you are in real trouble. First gear and maximum lock to the left is needed."

"With traction control, accelerating out of the hairpin is easier, but the next two corners at Portier are tricky. With the tunnel coming up — one of the only real overtaking opportunities of the lap, you want to carry good speed through these turns. This double right leads into the cool, dark but very noisy tunnel. There is a kink in the tunnel to the right, but that is flat. Out into the sunlight once again and you approach the Nouvelle Chicane in top gear at around 290kph. Again the braking has to be spot on to slow to 80kph and second gear in about 80 meters."

"Into the final third of the lap. You arrive at Tabac and zip left at 150kph. It is narrow, and as with most corners on the lap, you cannot see the exit so you have to have absolute faith in the car and marshals. Then, the Swimming Pool and the quick left-right before you brake hard for the tighter right and then throw the car immediately left to leave the complex. Three corners from home now and the Rascasse is a double right-hander in first gear right under the lenses of the photographers, and then a quick squirt of the throttle takes you up to Anthony Noghes, the final corner of the lap. Running as close to the wall on the left as you dare, you feel the left hand side of the car ride the small curbs as you arrive at the back of the grid, accelerating up through the gears. If you're quick, you can catch a glimpse of your pit board being hung out on the right, but you haven't got long before you arrive at St. Devote again."

David Coulthard's View

Regarding the track changes: "It looks a lot more open. I'm conscious of not saying it looks easier, just in case I go and drop the ball there. But it does look like it's less challenging, the entry to Rascasse, than it was in the past, which in some respects is a shame because that was one of the difficult spots on the track. But I think generally, it may give us more opportunity for overtaking, then if not overtaking, it should make it easier to lap slower cars during the race, so all in all, I would say it is an improvement."

Juan Pablo Montoya's View

Regarding the track changes: "It's all right, you know. It's a bit different. I'm surprised they still kept the very slow chicane after the swimming pool. I think it could have been a bit quicker. I think, into the last corner, it will probably save a lot of money for the teams because that's the place that everybody crashes."



The Track's F1 History

There is no way I am going to go through all the 47 races here, so I'll concentrate on the last several races.

Traditionally Monaco has always been won by the top driver on the grid (this is the last circuit where the driver matters more than the car). Ironically two former world champions have never won here; Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve. Hill was looking set for a win in **1996** until a rare Renault engine failure ended his race going through the tunnel. Villeneuve, by contrast, seems to have real difficulties in keeping the car out of the barriers here.

In **1997** he and Frenzen proved that overtaking was possible when they lined up on the front of the grid in the pouring rain on slick tires and managed to get shuffled to the back in the first 10 laps! Schumacher is always very good at Monaco. He won there in 1994, 1995, 1997 and dominated the race last year.

In **1998** Hakkinen won despite expectations. Schumacher ended up being hamstrung that year after a real ding dong battle with Alex Wurz. Schumacher finished a long way back in 10th place while Wurz's Benetton did a very credible impression of a torpedo as it's suspension failed going through the tunnel at 165mph!

In **1999** Schuey led a Ferrari 1-2 with Irvine dutifully following his team leader home. The scarlet cars were in a different league to everyone else and Schuey racked up his win to become the most successful Ferrari driver ever.

In **2000** suspension trouble led to a non-Schuey win (Schuey won in Monaco in 94, 95, 97, 99 and last year) and it was also the first race at which Schuey ran his new red helmet design in an effort to be easily distinguished from his team mate Barrichello who had been running a similar design. In the race itself Coulthard won easily after Schuey's suspension collapsed. Barrichello was about 20 seconds back but never really looked to threaten.

In **2001** Coulthard achieved his most impressive pole position but McLaren managed to blow his race by having his launch control fail as he attempted to lead away for the warm up lap. In the race himself he was repeatedly held up by Enrique Bernoldi resulting in some ugly scenes after the race involving Bernoldi being muscled by Ron Dennis and Norbert Haug. Schuey went on to score an effortless 1-2 with Barrichello for Ferrari. Eddie Irvine scored Jaguar's first

(and so far only) podium with third place.

2002 saw Montoya achieved a great last gasp pole position but DC's launch control managed to get him into the lead ahead of the Colombian. After that Coulthard held of incredible pressure from Michael Schumacher and his engine (which appeared to be on its last legs for much of the race) to claim his second win at Monaco. Last year the race was somewhat overshadowed by an almighty crash in qualifying which ruled Jenson Button out of the race. Button crashed exiting the tunnel at the same lence that left Karl Wendlinger in a coma in 1994. The cockpit protection added to the rules in 1996 did its job, however and Jenson was just a little groggy and fit for the next race. On the Sunday Montoya produced one of the most controlled yet aggressive drives of his career to win from Kimi Raikkonen. Montoya was seen by many to come of age in his win and this set the stage for a concerted push for the title that was to last until the US Grand Prix in September. Kimi came second and Michael Schumacher's Ferrari came third.

The Track

Monaco is the most famous street circuit in the world. The first race was held in the principality in 1929, and the event has always been a part of the F1 calendar. The track at Monaco is famously bumpy, tight and twisty. Monaco is the most famous race of the F1 season and is the only one whose date is not determined by Bernie Ecclestone (it is always held 6 weeks after Ascension Day).

Jim Clark complained about Monaco being unsuitable for contemporary F1 cars in 1966 so it is pretty obvious what the circuit is like now for them! Unlike all the other circuits Monaco is public road for the other 51 weeks of the year (part of Albert Park is nominally public road but it isn't exactly used much!). The circuit is also unlike other circuits in that it is lined by Armco as opposed to having sand traps. The result of this is that if you make a mistake and go off you will almost certainly damage the car. The circuit is built almost overnight and the close barriers leave little room for error. Overtaking is also very rare and impatience tends to fog drivers' judgment, causing passing attempts at almost impossible places.

The Monaco race is also unique in that the first practice session takes place on Thursday instead of Friday (the circuit turning back into roads on Friday). Unfortunately, contemporary Formula 1 is too large for the principality so the last two teams have to park their third transporter outside the country and wheel their cars in (many of the other teams end up using an underground car park in a similar way to allow more space in the cramped garages!). Staying on the track is vital during the race weekend because switching to the spare car is more of a drag here than at other circuits. This is strange really as the setup for this circuit is pretty obvious — crank the wings up to maximum, raise the ride height of the car and give it lots of acceleration and off you go!

In recent years Monaco races have been dominated by Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher, but the circuit is often the scene of some the more surprising results. Olivier Panis won in 1996 from 14th on the grid for instance.

In the wet, Monaco is a slippery nightmare, but the best drivers thrive on it. Schumacher dominated in 1997, while back in 1984 Ayrton Senna and Stefan Bellof outshone the established stars in their debut seasons.

Last Year's Monaco Grand Prix Results

Circuit Name / Location: Monaco

| Position | Driver | Team | Engine | Time | Laps |
|----------|--------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|------|
| 1 | Juan Pablo Montoya | Williams | BMW V10 | 1h42m19.010s | 78 |
| 2 | Kimi Raikkonen | McLaren | Mercedes V10 | 1h42m19.610s | 78 |
| 3 | Michael Schumacher | Ferrari | Ferrari V10 | 1h42m20.710s | 78 |
| 4 | Ralf Schumacher | Williams | BMW V10 | 1h42m47.510s | 78 |

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------|--------------|--------------|----|
| 5 | Fernando Alonso | Renault | Renault V10 | 1h42m55.210s | 78 |
| 6 | Jarno Trulli | Renault | Renault V10 | 1h42m59.910s | 78 |
| 7 | David Coulthard | McLaren | Mercedes V10 | 1h43m00.210s | 78 |
| 8 | Rubens Barrichello | Ferrari | Ferrari V10 | 1h43m02.210s | 78 |



Strategy

Until the new rules regarding qualifying came into force Monaco was an easy one to work out - top the car up and go! For this year the race will be an interesting one to read as some teams will undoubtedly go for banzai low fuel runs to get the exposure whilst others will pace themselves without wanting to be held up behind slower cars. The faster pit lane speed limit is sure to have an effect as is the repositioning of the pits. Expect a few cars in the barriers during qualifying!

Standings

The standings page will be updated in each race preview with the latest results.

Standings

This page will be updated in each race preview with the latest driver and constructor results.

2004 F1 Driver's Championship Standings

(through 5 of 18 races)

| Position | Driver | Team | Points |
|----------|----------------|---------|--------|
| 1 | M. Schumacher | Ferrari | 50 |
| 2 | R. Barrichello | Ferrari | 32 |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|----|----------------|----------|----|
| 3 | J. Button | BAR | 24 |
| 4 | F. Alonso | Renault | 21 |
| | J. Truilli | Renault | |
| 6 | J. Montoya | Williams | 18 |
| 7 | R. Schumacher | Williams | 12 |
| 8 | T. Sato | BAR | 8 |
| 9 | D. Coulthard | McLaren | 4 |
| 10 | G. Fisichella | Sauber | 2 |
| 11 | F. Massa | Sauber | 1 |
| | M. Webber | Jaguar | |
| | K. Raikkonen | McLaren | |
| 14 | Z. Baumgartner | Minardi | 0 |
| | G. Bruni | Minardi | |
| | C. da Matta | Toyota | |
| | N. Heidfeld | Jordan | |
| | C. Klien | Jaguar | |
| | O. Panis | Toyota | |
| | G. Pantano | Jordan | |

2004 F1 Constructor's Championship Standings

(through 5 of 18 races)

| Position | Team | Points |
|----------|----------|--------|
| 1 | Ferrari | 82 |
| 2 | Renault | 42 |
| 3 | BAR | 32 |
| 4 | Williams | 30 |
| 5 | McLaren | 5 |
| 6 | Sauber | 3 |
| 7 | Jaguar | 1 |
| 8 | Jordan | 0 |
| | Minardi | |
| | Toyota | |

The Teams

This section will be updated in each race preview with the latest news and tidbits regarding the 2004 F1 Teams and their drivers.

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Marlboro Ferrari *(Red with Marlboro graphics)*

A highly productive test for Bridgestone in Spain after the last race spells bad news for the other teams ahead of this weekend's race. The team have now set themselves the task of winning every round of this year's championship and there is every reason to believe they may do it. Bridgestone have managed to eliminate the first lap maladies that were evidenced in San Marino and Barcelona and the team believe they can repeat Alberto Ascari's record. The one hope for those who enjoy grand prix racing is that the Ferrari has the longest wheelbase on the grid. Although it may seem strange, the same principals which apply to seeing limos meandering around city streets can be applied to F1 cars around Monaco. The longer the wheelbase the more difficult it is to turn the car in in Monaco. Cars used to be specially made for Monaco's unique challenges and it was only a tightening of the rules by the FIA that stopped this practice in the mid 90s. Ferrari are certainly favorites to win but they do not have all the cards stacked on their side for once and this race is less of a foregone conclusion than many will be this season.

M. Schumacher

Although he should be confident going into this race, Michael Schumacher appears anything but, citing Jarno Trulli and Jenson Button as both being capable of beating him this weekend. It is true that both drivers have led Schumacher in the last two races but it would be a lie to suggest that Schumacher looked under any serious pressure. As long as Schuey is in the fist group of cars all he will need to do is keep out long enough at the pitstops to put in some scorching laps and he should appear comfortably in the lead (as he did at Imola and Barcelona). The Ferrari has the pace and Schuey has won here five times in the past. That said one of the most one sided Monaco races came in 1988 when Ayrton Senna led Alain Prost by half a minute. Prost did a quick lap and Senna responded before crashing out at Masinee in a silly mistake. Luck can really play a part in winning here.

Barrichello

Although there is no doubt that the F2004 is one of the finest cars on the circuit currently, Rubens seems to be having more trouble in disappearing from the pack than Schumacher. Barrichello certainly does not seem as comfortable with the car as his team mate and it is a surprise to see him struggle. In Spain Rubens ran an unconventional strategy that left him 6th on the grid but heavy with fuel. Decent speed through the race saw Rubens 3rd at the flag but he was clearly disappointed not to get 2nd place and felt he could have taken Trulli if he had had half a chance. Barrichello looks set for another second place in the championship and, although he is widely feted in Italy, it seems difficult to fathom how Rubens can maintain focus, knowing he will always be number 2 in the team while Schumacher is driving there.

BMW Williams F1 *(Dark Blue and White with Compaq and Allianz graphics)*

The ugly duckling of the F1 world is certainly not setting the world alight at the moment. McLaren and Williams are the only two teams persisting with the twin keel design of their chassis and it is notable that neither team are really living up to their pre-season promise. BMW is certainly not the most powerful engine on the grid and its torque curve is not the most useable either. Ralf Schumacher's pole position last year was the first indication that the team were beginning to come to terms with the setting up of the FW25 and this in turn set the scene for a phoenix-like recovery through the mid season before being ultimately frustrated . At the moment Ralf is highly pragmatic when he says it would take a miracle to repeat the performance this year. Williams clearly still do not properly understand the car and in particular the vagaries of its setting up due to having a twin keel design. Until this has been properly formulated the team have no chance.

R. Schumacher

Very much the number two driver in the team, Ralf's negotiations with Toyota have been slightly blown out of the water by David Coulthard's telling the press that the team had already signed him! Luckily this is the most open secret in the paddock at the moment so is hardly a surprise! Ralf has been pouring scorn on the idea that Jacques Villeneuve may be returning to the team with which he won his world championship in 1997. "Certainly Jacques would be good for Formula 1, but I'd just be very surprised if he came back to Williams. I remember the days when Frank [Williams] and Patrick [Head] just blamed him for everything and just hated him and wanted to fire him and said he was useless. Fine, if he comes back next year to Williams, he would be a very nice team mate if I am still here. From his last few years he didn't look so strong, but maybe that will change..."

Unfortunately for Ralf his problems this season continued on Thursday when his engine expired, preventing his accumulating valuable running time and demoting him by 10 places from his qualifying place. You could tell he was not happy afterwards! "The engine problem I had at the beginning of today's first session undermined all my plans for this weekend," he said. "Adding to the penalty that I will have to start 10 places further back on the grid, I have also lost a lot of valuable time for setting up the car. This means we have a lot of work ahead of us for Saturday's practice. This is not an ideal situation, but I'll make the best of it."

Montoya

After a pretty disappointing weekend in Spain Montoya has been keeping a low profile leading up to this weekend's grand prix. Frank Williams has been heaping praise on his outgoing driver saying that he felt Montoya was the bets overtaker in Formula 1 (which is probably true) and that Williams has let their drivers down by giving them a car in which they can not compete for the world championship (which is certainly true!). Williams turned last season around at Monaco but it would be a real surprise to see them repeat the feat this year. Montoya is sure to try hard but whether that will be enough remains to be seen.

West McLaren Mercedes *(Grey with West graphics)*

Another shocking race for McLaren and it seems clear that the Working team are suffering the biggest dip in their performance since they first came to the fore in the early 80s. McLaren's new headquarters in Woking were opened by the Queen last week and it is hoped that the team's settling into their new office will presage their return to competitiveness. Much will rely on the MP4/19B (effectively an entirely new car) which is hoped to return the team to respectability, even if returning to the front of the grid may take slightly longer. Martin Whitmarsh seems anything but optimistic in the team's run up to Monte Carlo "Since the Spanish GP we have been testing at Paul Ricard in the south of France with David, Kimi, Alex Wurz and Pedro de la Rosa. In addition to progressively working our way through the proving process of some chassis and engine modifications, we also completed our Monaco-specific preparations. Both our drivers are confident on the streets of Monte Carlo, with its unique characteristics, and will be able to push the car hard given its limitations. As we have previously outlined, there will be no overnight fix, but we have a clear development plan in place with regards the current issues."

Coulthard

Coulthard, a two times winner of this race, seems confident in his abilities to secure a drive next season even if the chance of anything more than points this outing seems unlikely."For me, the Monaco GP is definitely one of the key features of the Formula 1 season. Despite this quantity of corners overtaking is virtually impossible. There are some chances, such as the braking zone into Mirabeau, but it's always very risky. My two victories at Monaco have been highlights of my career so far. Realistically it is unlikely I will add another Monte Carlo win to my tally this year, however hopefully we will be able to improve on performance in Spain and take some points." DC is being seriously looked at by Williams and is also said to be top of Jaguar's and Toyota's lists for their vacant seats next year so it seems unlikely that this will be David's last season in Formula 1.

Raikkonen

Kimi seems to be enjoying this year more for the fact of just being able to concentrate on the individual races rather than gunning for the championship. He knows that the current malaise within the team is nothing to do with him and also knows that he has a secure drive for next season. Kimi seems to be relaxing and building up experience which will help him overcome his new team mate next year. "Like most of the drivers, I always enjoy the Monaco GP. There is a special atmosphere about the event, it's a totally different race than all the other tracks on the calendar, I would say it is a real driver's circuit. I had a close battle with Juan Pablo last year, it was a good race, and although it is unlikely we will be at the front of the pack this weekend on current form, we are aiming to be more competitive than at the Circuit de Catalunya on the narrow streets of Monte Carlo."

Mild Seven Renault *(Dark and Light Blue and Yellow with Mild Seven graphics)*

This time last year Renault were seen as the favorites to take both pole position and the win here. Alonso had performed brilliantly in Spain and Trulli, who put in a mesmerizing performance to take second on the grid in 2000, is known as something of a Monaco specialist. As it was Renault fell flat both in qualifying and in the race due to lack of grip and optimistic set ups. This year designer Bob Bell is optimistic "This is traditionally a circuit that suits us: the R24 should perform strongly there, and the car has a good high-downforce package. Equally, our drivers have been impeccable so far and there is little reason for that to change in Monaco: Jarno (Trulli) has been historically very quick through the streets, and is extremely motivated after his first podium of the year."

Trulli

After a great race in Spain Trulli must feel on top of the world. He is matching his highly rated team mate both in qualifying and in the races and looks likely to stay next year. Jarno seems to be bubbling over with confidence coming into this race. "So far, the team has had a very strong start to the season, and for me, this is definitely the best start I have had in my time at Renault. Barcelona was a great result because we earned our finish - there was nothing lucky about it, no presents from other teams — and both Fernando and I are performing strongly in the championship. As a team, we are strong with perfect reliability, and motivation is high for Monaco. Even though the layout stays the same, Monaco is a different race every year," he says, "with its own surprises and characteristics. We made progress with the car at Barcelona, and it was very consistent in performance during the race. I think this can be a good race for us, but there are too many variables now to make any definite predictions."

Alonso

Like his team mate he is the closest thing to competition that Ferrari are regularly facing this season. Alonso is not setting the world alight this year as his team mate is far closer to him but he is still looking like a champion in the making - even though he is certainly not shading his team mate as Schumacher was doing to his various team mates in his Benetton years. Even so Alonso will certainly be at the front of the grid on Sunday. "The race is so different to anywhere else that we cannot make any predictions until we have started running on Thursday. It is very important to know the circuit well and to have experience racing there, to know how the track changes, and to best understand how to set the car up and cope with the changing conditions — grip levels increase very quickly, and that can catch you out."

BAR Honda *(White with Red Lucky Strike roundels)*

Despite a poor race in Spain BAR are still highly fancied by all in the pits to do well this weekend. Boss Dave Richards has admitted that he is now having to cherry pick sponsors after the interest and change in image the team has received after the podiums earlier this season. "This time last year, we might well have considered a two-car points finish in Barcelona to be a good result, so it's a measure of how far we've come that we all left Spain feeling slightly disappointed. Nonetheless, a solid result for both drivers enabled us to maintain 3rd in the Constructors' standings and

Jenson remains third in the Drivers' Championship, so we are on target against our season objectives. There is no doubt that we now feel we belong on the podium and Monaco will be no exception."

Button

With Anthony Davidson putting in some fantastic performances in the third BAR (run on Thursday in Monaco because of the market on Friday) Button has able support. Sato is showing his class and, although he has nowhere near Jenson's pace, he does provide good technical feedback being fluent in English. All in all Button has every reason to feel confident ahead of the weekend. "Monaco is very different to any other circuit. There are big barriers all the way around and it is very fast — it also seems faster to drive because the barriers are so much closer to the track. There is no margin for error and that's why you normally see people building up to a good lap time — some taking longer than others. It's obviously going to be very important to get plenty of mileage on the car and so hopefully Anthony will be able to do plenty of laps during Thursday's running. It's a circuit I enjoy and I think that we are going to be very strong there. Ferrari obviously remain the dominant force but it would be nice to get a good result and get back on the podium, especially after the accident I had here last year. All in all, I'm really looking forward to it."

Sato

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Sauber Petronas (*Mid Blue with a yellow airbox, white nose and front wing with Credit Suisse Red Bull and Petronas graphics*)

Sauber technical director Willy Rampf gave a detailed preview of how the team views setting up their cars for the weekend ahead. "Monaco is usually the highest downforce circuit of the season. Due to the new two-element rear wing rules this year there has been a reduction in downforce so you can expect to see everyone coming up with innovative ways of exploiting the regulations to maximize it. It is vital to alleviate the problems of generating sufficient grip that often arise on street circuits. The surface in Monte Carlo is quite low grip anyway, and though there is not a lot of really high-speed work there are plenty of medium-speed where downforce really counts. Mechanical set-up is also very important. This means generating as much grip from the car rather than the aerodynamics. At the same time, however, there is the added disadvantage that we have to run the highest ride heights of the season in order to avoid bottoming on the uneven surface of a street course, and this also levies a penalty in terms of lost downforce. Balancing that, however, we usually run the softest tire compounds that we will see in the year. Monaco also provides some very slow corners, in particular the Grand Hotel Hairpin, a left-hander that became famous under the name Loews. This is so tight that we have to customize the steering geometry specifically so that the drivers can get round it. "Overtaking is nearly impossible here, of course, so qualifying becomes even more critical and, with the way the regulations are today, that also has a knock-on effect on your race strategy. The pit entry is not very quick, so that is another factor to take into account. It is clear, therefore, that the only overtaking will be done during the pit stops and that strategy will be of crucial importance throughout."

Fisichella

Following on from his technical director Fisichella also gave an unusually candid appraisal of the weekend ahead. "We've been really strong at the last race in Barcelona. The team has worked very hard and the

chosen two-stop strategy paid off. Scoring two points was a valuable result for us. Now I'm quite curious how things will go for us in Monaco. I love Monaco! I was second in the Formula Three race there in 1993 and won it in 1994, and back in 1998 I was second behind Hakkinen. I was really happy with my own performance, and the car's, that day. The place has plenty of good memories for me. I feel very confident on the circuit. It's very challenging, because you need to get so close to the walls yet be so precise in everything you do. Ste Devote, for example, is quite difficult to get absolutely right; I've seen a lot of drivers lose a race there. If you go in just a few meters too late, you are in the wall. All round the lap you have to keep your concentration at the maximum, from the first lap to the last. And if other drivers make no mistakes, it's impossible to overtake anyone. Having said that, in 1994 I made a bad start and lost the lead to Jorg Muller, but managed to outbrake him at the chicane on the opening lap before he established his rhythm. Perhaps one of the best things about Monaco is the fact that it is a place where you can make a difference as a driver. You still need a very good car to do well there, but you can do a bit more to help make it quick."

Massa

Massa was rather kind to himself in his appraisal of the race. He completely stuffed up the 2002 Monaco Grand Prix! "The only race I have ever done at Monaco was the 2002 Grand Prix, and I crashed out of that very heavily in a head-on accident at Ste Devote after a rear brake problem. Despite that, I love the circuit! It is a difficult and challenging track, with the walls so close all the time. You have a much greater sense of speed as a result. You don't let them intimidate you, but you do have to be aware of them because they penalize the slightest mistake. It's very technical and traction is very important. You also need handling stability; the last thing you want is oversteer, especially braking hard for the chicane. We tested well in Fiorano in preparation for Monaco and have some more new parts for the car, so I hope we will be able to qualify well and therefore race strongly." One thing that has arisen out of practice for the race on Thursday was that Sauber's Bridgestone tires grained badly. These are the same tires as run by Ferrari in what is effectively Ferrari's old car. As a result it does offer a slight crumb of hope to the chasing pack that the Scuderia may struggle for consistency on Sunday!

Jaguar (*Green with HSBC graphics*)

The Jags will have more than a splash of color on Sunday's race. As at Silverstone and Monaco last year the cars will be changing their livery slightly. This time out it is to promote the new movie Ocean's Twelve and it is hoped that Brad Pitt, George Clooney and Julia Roberts will be on the grid on Sunday. Performance-wise the team have some work to do. The R5 started the season brightly enough but recent performances have not been encouraging and having rookie Klien in the team can not help (even though he has impressed in Barcelona and Bahrain). Jaguar (and Stewart before it) have a history of being lucky at Monaco and the team will be hoping for the best ahead of Sunday's race. The team were planning on running fences across the top of the rear wings similar to those BAR tried to race but had outlawed. Not surprisingly these too have been outlawed before they could be implemented this weekend. The fact that Webber has already suffered an engine fire means that it is likely he will be forced to change his engine and will therefore be penalized ten places in qualifying. Things can only get better for the team this weekend after that!

Webber

The current focus of this year's driver merry go around it seems highly unlikely that Mark Webber will be driving for the leaping cat in 2005. Webber is not especially concerned about media speculation over his future and he and David Coulthard did a great double act at deflecting questions regarding their futures at the Thursday press conference. Webber seemed genuinely upbeat over the weekend ahead. "I have great memories of Monaco especially from my win here in 2001 when I was competing in F3000. The street-circuit tends to favor those who have experience here, so for me this is a track that I really enjoy although even with a few years experience it can still throw surprises your way. The on-track activities are starting on Thursday this week and we will be looking to make the most of having three cars on track in order to complete as much mileage as possible. The track is generally quite slow and also bumpy so the

set-up and balance on the car can take some time to adjust. Mechanical grip is important here, perhaps more so than aero. I know that the team will be doing a good job in preparing the R5 so it will be down to me to keep it on track. You need 100% concentration on this track at all times as there is no run-off areas, you don't get a second chance if you make a mistake. I will be looking to qualify well as there are few overtaking opportunities and as a result you need to make the most of attrition, of which I am sure there will be some! You also need to be careful about getting stuck behind some of the slower cars as traffic on the track can really mess up your strategy. Whatever way we look at it, it's going to be an interesting race and the spectators are always guaranteed some entertainment here!"

Klein

In the opposite position to Webber is his teammate. Webber has had some good experiences on Monaco's streets and can be said to know the circuit well. By comparison Christian Klien is a Monaco newcomer and the best he can really be looking at (as he himself admits) is to nurse the car home in one piece. "I don't know this circuit at all so this is going to be a testing weekend for me on track. However saying that, this will not be the first track I will have raced at where I have no experience so I am going into it open-minded and motivated. I have read much about the circuit and the race weekend and I am looking forward to racing on a circuit that has so much history connected to it. My team of engineers has been doing their best to describe the likely challenges of the circuit to me but until I get out there I won't really know. I will be making the most of the Thursday testing and working on my set-up and balance here. The circuit is also likely to be quite hard on the tires and traction will be important here. We have a good competitive car in the R5 and I will be aiming for the checkered flag here and points would be a bonus. If I can bring the car home in one piece and avoid the barriers I will be pleased."

Panasonic Toyota *(Red and White with Toyota and Panasonic logo graphics)*

Given the money being invested in Toyota's racing program it is incredible that the team are not planning on implementing any further changes to the basic chassis before the TF104B is introduced at Hockenheim. Mike Gascoyne remains upbeat even though he is realistic about the team's chances. "The Monaco Grand Prix is unique in terms of the technical and operational challenge it offers. This year, we will benefit from new pit facilities, which promise to make life easier all round. The mere nature of the tight and twisty Monaco circuit means that a driver's input is greater than at any other track on the calendar. The cars will run maximum downforce and must cope with the bumpy street course. From Panasonic Toyota Racing's view, we will have to look at extracting all we can from the TF104s, give the drivers as much track time as possible and ensure that as a team we make no mistakes which could affect our performance. Put simply, we have to be reliable, get two cars to the finish and see if we can pick anything up at the end of the weekend."

Panis

Unlike his team mate Olivier Panis is more of a realist regarding the team's chances this weekend. "To be honest, I don't think Monaco is the perfect circuit for us right now, as our package is not fantastic at low speeds, but I have always enjoyed the grand prix. Apart from winning in 1996, I have also had some very good results there. That's why I'm still quite positive and staying focused on the job in hand. Sometimes something happens at Monaco, which can move you up the field, so we will be looking to capitalize if it does. The most important thing about driving at Monaco is to be confident with the car you have but what you need to do is stay concentrated for the whole race and certainly not make any mistakes." It seems strange that a team willing to spend the hundreds of millions of dollars to compete in F1 is allowing themselves to be publicly humiliated in the most watched of all the grand prix. It is a brave move but not one that will endear them to their board members unless they have a damned good outing in Japan.

Da Matta

With seats rapidly running out for 2005 (seat negotiations are done long before they are ever made

public) Christiano da Matta may well struggle to get a drive for next year. He is like his team mate. Impressive enough and works well with engineers but certainly nothing special. Da Matta's only hope is that Ove Andersson can convince the team not to make the same mistake twice. Andersson admits it was a mistake to sack McNish as well as Salo and will be hoping for history not to repeat itself. Da Matta does not seem concerned though. "I enjoy racing at the Monaco Grand Prix, and I just missed out on the points on my debut there in 2003. Realistically, though, we will struggle to improve on that performance this year. In theory, Monaco is a difficult circuit for us because it's a bumpy track and one that requires lots of downforce, and these are two areas where we still need to find improvements. As I live in Monaco, I can usually go straight home on a scooter after my day's work, so that's a nice feeling and a refreshing change from the other races on the calendar."

Jordan (*Yellow with BandH graphics*)

With money as tight as ever at Jordan is now seriously looking at replacing one of his drivers from mid season on. Jos Verstappen is ready to drive at a moment's notice and his repaired relations with his personal (and Jordan's) sponsors Trust means that the Dutch computer firm will pay Jordan seriously big bucks to have him in the car. Verstappen is defiantly testing the car at Silverstone on June 1st (the big test at Silverstone — if anyone wants to see Formula 1 cars up close for free I recommend you go there!). The EJ14 is currently half a second slower than the cars in front and 0.3 seconds ahead of the leading Minardis. Although there is no doubt that this is anywhere than where the team wants to be at least they should have a couple less cars in front of them on Sunday following Webber and Ralfy's blowups!

Heidfeld

Favorite to be given the push should Verstappen join the team Nick has dismissed talk of his imminent departure and instead said how he was hoping he'd be driving with Verstappen in order that he may have a team mate who can give decent feedback! Heidfeld has been named by Williams as one of their second string of desirable drivers for next year and, although it seems unlikely that he will get the driver, it is good that he is at least being noted for doing a fantastic job for Jordan. Williams are certainly interested in having Heidfeld on board and the move would certainly mollify BMW. Heidfeld has shown himself well against Jean Alesi, Felipe Massa and Kimi Raikkonen and, although McLaren passed over their protégé for Raikkonen, it is keenly felt that Heidfeld is the best driver out there outside of the Schumachers. Having that tag didn't do much for his former team mate Frenzen but times are changing and it would not be a surprise to see Heidfeld in a Williams next season.

Pantano

How embarrassing! Not only did Pantano lose one of his key sponsors this week plunging the team into a financial crisis and putting his position in jeopardy but Giorgio then managed to injure himself playing football! Pantano still managed to take part in today's free practice and then further embarrassed himself by lapping slower than pay driver tester Timo Glock and stalling on the entrance to the pitlane thereby causing a traffic jam that delayed the rest of the grid for several minutes. Giorgio did recover to set the 16th fastest time on Friday and had this to say about his day. "I'm quite happy today. We did quite good work but there is more to gain with the car and also from me. By Saturday I am sure we can improve the car, the lap time, and also my performance. We will try, as always, to do our maximum and continue to close the gap to the front teams. It would be good if we can find a way to score some points in this race."

Wilux Minardi Cosworth (*Black, white and Wilux written in Light Blue on White on Sides and rear wing*)

Slowest of the teams by nearly a second Minardi did at least have some recompense by running reliably on Thursday. The cars have been suffering through running the same engines all weekend when they were designed only to run a session at a time. That said the design is tidy and the team feel that they only require a little luck to score their first points of the season. It is not known if Bridgestone will be supplying their super soft compound to Jordan and Minardi

but if they are Minardi in particular may gain as it is known that the PS04 is incredibly kind to its tires so will not suffer the graining that seems to be affecting the likes of Sauber and Ferrari.

Bruni

Bruni caught the attention of many in the pitlane by bringing his new girlfriend along - his grid girl for the Australian Grand Prix! Aussie model Atisa de Kretser had been telephone dated ever since she stood holding his placard (oo-er!). Considering Australia was Bruni's first Formula 1 race you have to give the Italian marks both for style and for keeping a level head in what must be a pretty fraught situation. Picture the scene - its your first grand prix start, interviews left, right and center, talking with the engineers and 80,000 fans around you and you still manage to find enough time in the ten minutes or so before the race to chat the grid girl up enough to get her number?! Aside from all this Bruni does reckon he can get points with a bit of luck and this is true. With points given down to eighth place and the Minardi easy to drive (if not particularly spectacular) Bruni may finish if the engine doesn't blow up and consequently could get a point.

Baumgartner

Zsolt was pretty pleased with his Thursday performance. Although he was last on the timesheets he seemed pretty pleased with his progress. "I was pleased to get into a good rhythm pretty much straightaway. I have driven here in F3000, but this place is very different in an F1 car – the speed is just so much higher and the track is very narrow. I made a small mistake in the first session and touched the barrier with the right rear wheel of the car. Fortunately, there wasn't too much damage, and although we lost some time in the garage while repairs were made, by the end of the second session we had made up the time and finished everything we had planned. I didn't set the best time I could have today because it's difficult to get a clear lap around here with all the traffic, but that's just the way Monaco is." Although Zsolt hasn't got much of a chance on Sunday it is worth remembering that just by being on the grid and not stuffing the car into the wall he is doing pretty well. To give a comparison the new McLaren-Mercedes supercar weighs around 2 tons and has 600bhp. It is felt by many to be very quick and a bit of a handful at times. The Minardi weighs less than a quarter of that and has almost one and a half times the horsepower. To then drive this car quickly around city streets (which are far more windy than they appear on television) takes some doing. Even so he hasn't a chance in the race!

Alex's 2004 Spanish Grand Prix Predictions

Qualifying

1. Michael Schumacher
2. Jenson Button
3. Jarno Trulli

Race

1. Michael Schumacher
2. Jarno Trulli
3. Fernando Alonso