

Getting to know the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve

It's all about the brakes, baby. At least, it's all about the braking stability. Step inside, and learn a little more about this weekend's bumpy race track. In the run-up to the race, Mercedes issued a report on braking at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, and it was more than a little illuminating.

"The energy input to the brakes [in Canada] is roughly double that measured in Spa," the report states. "At both circuits, the drivers spend around 15 seconds of the total lap time braking; in Montreal this accounts for 20 percent of the lap spent on the brakes, while in Spa it only represents 14 percent. The biggest single braking event comes at Turn 10, where the cars must slow from 295 kph to just 60 kph for the corner apex. The cars shed 235 kph in a distance of just 140m. When deceleration is at its greatest, the drivers are subjected to peak forces of some 5.5G. ... A typical [brake distribution] figure is a front to rear brake force distribution of approximately 55 percent front/45 percent rear. However, this changes with KERS, which provides significant torque to the rear axle under braking. This means the drivers must run the brake balance even further forward to prevent the rear tyres from locking."

Of course, it's not really all about the brakes. It never is. There's low-downforce set-ups, the FIA's 2-for-1 offer on DRS zones, engine power, and the ability to find grip where none exists.

The Circuit Gilles Villeneuve combines low-speed corners and chicanes with long straights, making traction absolutely vital this weekend. And it is at the end of those long straights that braking stability comes into force. At no fewer than four points on a single lap, cars are reaching around 295 kph. There are six points described by team principals as "major braking events".

HRT boss Colin Kolles says the Canadian circuit "combines long straights with slow corners, meaning that cars are pushed to the limit. Engines are at maximum revs for long periods of time, brakes are given a tough time and gearboxes are worked extremely hard. Brake cooling and stability under braking play a big role in the performance of the car. The track also grains the tyres because of the constant acceleration and braking which causes the wheels to spin up and slide, sheering the rubber, particularly on rear tyres."

This is no slow stop at a traffic light, that's for sure.

Pirelli explained it well in their preview of the Canadian weekend: "The tight section in the middle of the track is characterised by two chicanes, a double braking area, and some rapid changes in direction – all in the space of less than 700 metres," the release reads. "These extreme stresses raise the tread temperature of the tyres by 20 degrees in just 15 seconds, with a peak temperature exceeding 110 degrees centigrade. One of the most demanding areas of the entire lap for the car, driver and tyres is the long hairpin bend where the cars scrub off 230 kph during the approach – down from 290kph to just 60kph – in less than three seconds over the space of only 130 metres. These parameters combine to produce a vertical pressure of 1100 kilograms on the front tyres. Entering this corner is one of the prime spots for overtaking."

Combining the circuit layout with the variation in surface – and resulting variations in grip – means that tyre wear is inconsistent, adding to the strategic challenge. The pitlane is a perfect example of this: part concrete and part asphalt, drivers cannot count on consistency even when pulling in for fresh rubber.

Thanks to the number of overtaking opportunities on offer in Canada, teams can afford to be more aggressive – adventurous, even – with their strategies. Pirelli are predicting a two-stop race on Sunday (depending on the weather), but even a standard two-stopper can lead to a host of permutations on track.

The strong likelihood of a Safety Car in Montreal is another factor likely to shake up the racing. Stats show that two-thirds of the recent Canadian grands prix have featured Safety Cars, but it is impossible to plan for their precise arrival. With the traditional first-lap carnage no longer a certainty, teams will write in a Safety Car Plan B to their strategies and keep their fingers crossed that the timing works out in their favour.

Williams driver Rubens Barrichello was another man to concentrate on the tyres in his pre-race comments. "The Montreal circuit can be hard on tyres because the cars run on low downforce and the tarmac is quite low grip," the Brazilian driver explained. "The track has some change of direction, is very hard on brakes and has two hairpins that make good traction very important. Turn 1, for example, is a corner that you carry a lot of speed into and then you brake hard into the hairpin in first gear. The minimum speed is low but traction is hard on tyres. There are a lot of hard braking areas throughout the lap."

But it's not just tyres that experience an extreme race. Fuel consumption is high, and Sunday's grid is likely to see the heaviest fuel tanks of the season.

The current configuration of the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve has been in use since 2002, when the hairpin was shortened and the pit exit modified, and measures 4.361km. Presuming it runs for the full distance, the grand prix will last for 70 laps, bringing the total distance run to 305.270 kilometres.

The Circuit Gilles Villeneuve is one of those tracks that rewards those drivers who know how to make the most of it. Winners, pole sitters, and the like tend to cluster. Robert Kubica always shone here; Lewis Hamilton is good around the track, and Michael Schumacher has collected Canadian records as if they were penny sweets. Pfennig sweets? Maybe not. Past Montreal winners still on the grid are: Lewis Hamilton (2007, 2010), Fernando Alonso (2006), and Michael Schumacher (1994, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004).

The group of previous pole sitters is fairly small, and – as was the case in Barcelona – the lion's share of poles have been claimed by a certain German legend: Lewis Hamilton (2007, 2008, 2010), Fernando Alonso (2006), Jenson Button (2005), and Michael Schumacher (1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001).

Fastest laps at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve have been claimed by Fernando Alonso (2003, 2007), Rubens Barrichello (2004), and Michael Schumacher (1993, 1994, 1995, 1998). Robert Kubica took the fastest lap in 2010, while Kimi Raikkonen had three fastest laps in four years towards the end of the last decade.

The current lap record at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve is Rubens Barrichello's 2004 time of 1:13.622s, set at an average speed of 213.246kph.

F1 Canada Blog - Components, upgrades, and aero packages in Montreal

While the majority of teams have held off on supplying details of their Canadian upgrades, one thing is known: at a track comprised of straights linked by the odd corner, everyone will be bringing low-downforce packages to Montreal.

The Canadian Grand Prix is the first low-downforce track on the calendar, so keep an eye out for different wing configurations as teams attempt to minimise drag and improve traction out of slow corners.

The bulk of the grid has refrained from furnishing the competition with any advantage by detailing this weekend's components. One of the few teams to go on the record with this weekend's package was Williams.

According to technical director Sam Michael, the Grove-based team "will have a new front wing, brake ducts, barge boards and modified diffuser to test during practice, as well as the obligatory new rear wing for the lower drag level required in Canada."

Renault technical director James Allison was another man brave enough to go into detail about his team's new parts. "We have a new front wing to complement the downforce levels of the rear," he explained, "and there will be various other refinements on the car, with particular emphasis on ensuring there is good airflow to help with brake cooling."

Pat Fry, newly-promoted chassis director at Ferrari, was also willing to talk about his team's efforts this weekend. "There is always a steady stream of updates coming through and this time we will have a few changes to the diffuser and rear wing," he said, "which will bring a reasonable performance step if everything goes to plan. Hopefully we are still closing the gap to those ahead of us, allowing for the fact that others are working too."

In addition to the standard low-downforce set-up, HRT will be debuting a new exhaust system this weekend.

The other teams have all refrained from going into any detail about this weekend's upgrades.

F1 Canada Blog - Thursday press conference in Montreal

Accidents, attitude, double the DRS fun, and Bahrain were the main topics of conversation when Lewis Hamilton (McLaren), Pastor Maldonado (Williams), Sergio Perez (Sauber), Vitaly Petrov (Renault), and Adrian Sutil (Force India) sat down for the Thursday drivers' press conference at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

There is a strong argument for saying that modern F1 drivers have had too much media training. Asked to express personal opinions on the wisdom of racing in Bahrain, all responded with the party line about F1 safety. The effect of a race – either positive or negative – on the Bahraini people did not figure in their responses.

The rest of the world is looking to Formula 1 to take a stand on Bahrain after the chaos of the past week, but by and large F1 drivers are unwilling to stick their heads above the parapet and risk offending their sponsors. Here, in the order the answers were given, are precisely the responses you might have supplied yourself if asked to write a neutral press release on the subject.

Adrian Sutil: "I think that for me, I would say, as long as it's safe, I could race there, but I'm not in charge of that, so the FIA and the FOTA is doing that and I think they will find a solution. But for me, as long as it's safe I'm happy to race. It's a good place to go, I always like this circuit so that's all I can say about that."

Vitaly Petrov: "I think the question is just about the safety. The FIA knows what to do. If they see that it will not be dangerous, we will go. If it's still dangerous I think it's better not to go."

Pastor Maldonado: "Okay, let's wait for the FOTA decision. I think we are drivers who enjoy racing. For sure it's a difficult time there but I think we need to wait and see what they decide."

Lewis Hamilton: "I think the drivers mostly commented on things. Hopefully the teams and the FIA and the drivers will collectively make the right decision and us as drivers, we just have to rely on them that the right decision will be made. We want to race, not just for our own benefit but also for the benefit of others as well."

Sergio Perez: "Well, first of all for me it was important to recover after the crash so I'm not very aware of the news. I will speak to my team and see what is the latest news. I don't know if everything is clear to race there but for me, if it's one race more or if my team agrees and all the drivers and teams agree, then I think there's no problem to go if everything is safe again."

Both Petrov and Perez suffered accidents during the Monaco Grand Prix weekend, and both men were very lucky not have been seriously injured. While Perez' smash landed the young driver in hospital, Petrov was initially concerned he'd lost all feeling in his legs. Both drivers are fine now and fit to race.

"I am fine, thank you," Petrov said. "It looks now everything is good. When I went to the hospital they prepare for me the bed close to Sergio but at the moment everything is fine. ... The problem first of all was my legs were stuck inside the cockpit. At the same time I tried to move them and I didn't feel them. This is why I decided it is better to wait for someone to help me as I tried to feel my fingers on the leg and I couldn't feel them. This is why I didn't want to do some bullshit. I just wait for the people who can help me to do something. I thought it was broken to be honest but I was lucky it was not."

It was more touch and go for Perez, who had to pass an FIA medical exam before he could be allowed to race this weekend.

"I just went to do an exam and do all the tests with the FIA and everything was fine," the Sauber driver said. "We gave them our results from the doctors and everything is fine to race again this weekend. ... They released me from hospital on Monday. I stayed in Monaco for two or three days, just working and recovering from the accident. Then I flew to Zurich to do another check-up with a clinic there and after that everything was okay. Then I went back to Mexico, which is very close from here. I was some days at home, which was very positive for me. Then I went to do karting on Monday and Tuesday so I am already okay."

"After the accident, everything was planned to leave the day after, but I felt a bit dizzy so I stayed [in hospital] one more day and there was enough time, we were always very positive that there was enough time to recover after the accident," he continued. "All the doctors were very positive that nothing was damaged, no problem at all, so it was just a matter of time to get back to normal life, and I got back very quickly. They did all their examinations - actually they are very good examinations. They checked all my bones, my reactions, my memory, that everything is fine and that I don't feel sick or have a headache and they saw all the results from the doctors, so that's what they did."

Perez' pre-race preparations were thrown into chaos by his Monaco crash. While the rookie driver was supposed to do simulator work on the track last week, his hospital stay put paid to that idea. As a result, the Mexican driver's only experience of the circuit comes via the PlayStation...

"I have played it on PlayStation but I could not use the simulator as I was planning to do after Monaco but it was not possible to go," Perez explained. "I have seen a lot of on-boards. I think it is a very special circuit. You are always very close to the walls and to do a good lap around here you have to really push a lot to get the maximum out of the car and out of the lap."

The rest of the press conference was an all-Lewis affair, as the British driver was asked to explain his Monaco attitude, pontificate on double DRS zones, and lay some non-existent Ferrari rumours to rest.

First, Monaco.

"Well, last week, coming back from the Grand Prix, I had some time to reflect on my behaviour and my weekend and again, just a feeling of it just being a bad day, a bad weekend in the office, so I wrote a letter to the FIA to apologise, and I also spoke to the drivers," Hamilton explained. "I just felt it was necessary to do that, I think it was the right thing for me to do and to be able to put everything behind me."

"This is racing, you know. When you're competitive - and this is the pinnacle of motor sport - and it's not easy to overtake in this sport, and so every manoeuvre you make is definitely questionable," he continued. "Sometimes you get it right, sometimes you don't. So it's inevitable when I do quite a lot of overtaking quite often, so sometimes it's going to be right, sometimes not, but I think the stewards are doing a great job. Since I've been in Formula 1, it's been improving, the consistency of the rules, the approach of the stewards with the new racing driver, I think it makes it much better so while I would prefer not to be up at the stewards' office so often - and trust me, I'm trying my hardest to stay out of there - my whole life I was always in the headmaster's office so I'm used to it. I would just try to improve and learn from the situations that I get myself into."

Hamilton was then asked whether he had written his mea culpa letter to the FIA with a view to heading off a possible ban.

"It wasn't in mind, no, but just as I said earlier, I just had time to reflect on the weekend and I wrote a sincere apology to Jean and to the FIA and I got a great letter back, so after that I was able to put it behind me and I'm very grateful to be here," he said. "I do want what's best for the sport and I want to be able to contribute to improving the sport and making things great here."

While Hamilton was obviously keen to put the Monaco weekend behind him, the assembled pack of press hounds wouldn't let him off that easily. The British driver was also asked whether his colleagues had accepted his apologies.

"I know Felipe really well, I've known Felipe since Formula 3, maybe GP2 and so have a relatively good relationship with him," the McLaren driver explained. "I gave him a call and he had calmed down also and he was able to understand the position and I've seen him... I've known him for many years, actually. We've known each other for quite a few years, him and his family. You know he's doing a fantastic job, he was very quick that weekend and was obviously not wanting to put anyone out of the Grand Prix. It's one of the toughest Grands Prix to overtake, but I think the drivers understand and it's easy, in the heat of the moment, to say the wrong things but afterwards to realise that, okay, you probably were not in the right position to make the manoeuvre, so I felt it important for me to just make that clear to them and apologise for my statement afterwards."

For some reason, only Hamilton was asked to opine on the wisdom of two DRS zones.

"I guess it will make it much tougher," he said. "When you overtake one person you overtake them but then they are able to use DRS in the next zone. It is going to make it much harder as when you make an overtaking manoeuvre usually you are able to pull a little bit of a gap by the next lap so hopefully they are not right behind you but here you won't have. They will be right on your tail so I guess strategy and depending on where you use the DRS and the way you overtake it is going to be interesting. I would assume everyone would probably wait, just stay behind them and not even bother overtaking on the first DRS zone and wait for the last one so for the rest of the lap they are able to pull away."

"We use the DRS in qualifying, so we use it everywhere we can," he continued. "I think the great thing here is you see quite a lot of overtaking here."

You have the great long straight coming out of a hairpin. I definitely think it is not always easy to follow through corners still as you still need downforce. But the DRS, having it in two places, I think will enable people to get even closer. It is a long, long straight. I don't know where they put the DRS zone exactly for those straights. I think it will just make racing even better. Of course the FIA will assess if it is too easy or not too easy. I think we will work together with them to make sure the zones are set in the right place so we don't just whizz past people halfway down the straights. I think so far this year it has been fantastic for racing and enabled people to get close to actually make safe manoeuvres, so I think this weekend you will probably see that as well."

And finally, a little light relief, courtesy of a journalist wearing Ferrari shoes, a Ferrari teeshirt, and Ferrari-branded sunglasses who seemed to really want Lewis to move to the Scuderia.

Q: Lewis, yesterday you were driving Ferraris at Mont Tremblant race track in the Laurentians, so do we see a trend there?

LH: No, no, no. I was just at a friend's house and they were the only cars that he had, so I had a little bit of a go.

Q: Did you have fun go-karting at the same time there ?

LH: I didn't do any go-karting. I had planned to go there and just have some fun and he has a lot of cars, so I was going to get to drive a McLaren - the GTR longtail - but I thought it was probably just wise to just drive a road car around a couple of laps, so I only did a couple of laps, but I will definitely be going back at some stage to make sure I can use all the rubber that he has and all the brakes he has and it's free, so it should be fun.

FI Canada Blog - Ferrari Shell out on fuel research

Tucked away inside the Ferrari garage is a mini laboratory all decked out in white tiles, mind-boggling instruments, and phials that bring to mind a Victorian pharmacy.

But the phials are the only Victorian element to a very modern science lab, tricked out with the very latest in gas chromatographs (and all sorts of other equipment I couldn't hope to identify). The little white room is home to Shell's fuel and lubricant analysts, and is the only construction of its type in the paddock.

When thinking about technology in Formula 1 it is easy to be seduced by composite materials, powerful engines, and advances in aerodynamic understanding. But all that technology would be for nought were it not for the fuels that power the car, and the lubricants that keep the engine ticking over nicely throughout its 2,500km shelf-life.

The Shell laboratory is divided into two, with one side dedicated to fuel analysis, and the other to lubricants. Analysing fuel is a necessity, as the composition is governed by FIA rules and regulations, and scrutineering can happen at any time.

Prior to each race, teams must supply the FIA with samples of the fuel they intend to use that weekend. Each sample has its own fingerprint. Peaks and troughs on a graph show the presence of different metals and compounds, and those levels cannot change. If a post-race fuel sample doesn't have the FIA-approved fingerprint, disqualification ensues.

And it's all too easy for a fingerprint to change. Should an engine part need replacing, the new component can carry with it trace amounts of grease and dust that will alter the make-up, rendering the fuel illegal.

As a result, Shell's analysts are kept busy, working on approximately 30 fuel samples over the course of a grand prix weekend. Samples are taken before and after each practice session, throughout qualifying, and on race day. The technology available to the analysts allows them to produce reports for the team within two minutes of receiving each sample. The cars aren't the only thing that's fast about Formula 1.

Ferrari GarageBut while fuels are obviously key to racing success, in recent years lubricant analysis has also gained in importance.

Thanks to changes to engine allocation rules, engine life is now an important strategic factor. Twenty years ago, your qualifying grenade could fail after a pole lap and no one would bat an eyelid. The whole point of the grenades was their high-impact disposable charge. Expensive engines were akin to soiled tissues.

These days, however, with only eight engines per driver per season, teams need to do their utmost to extend engine life. Lubricants are vital in this regard.

By studying the analysis of both fuel and lubricant, engineers can predict component failure before it happens. At least, they can most of the time. Sometimes, shit just happens.

Because the reports contain levels of the trace amounts of metals found in each of the forty lubricant samples taken per weekend - be they copper, iron, titanium, magnesium, or almost anything else on the periodic table - engineers can establish which particular engine component is in the process of degrading, shedding bits of itself into the engine, the fuel, and the lubricant.

When Ferrari announce a precautionary engine change in the middle of a race weekend, odds are it's because Shell's fuel and lubricant analysts have supplied them with data pointing to a likely failure on track.

But there is more to lubricant and fuel analysis than just extending engine life and staying on the right side of the FIA's rules. What lubricant offers in engine protection, it can cost in horsepower. As a result, a vital part of Shell's work for Ferrari is ongoing research and development in to future fuels and lubricants. Shell's team aim to supply three or four 'upgrades' per season, and see their work as an extension of the component upgrades developed by a racing team throughout the calendar.

That research also winds up on the garage forecourt. Fuel will be road car relevant for many years to come, and an F1 team's need for efficiency and

horsepower makes the track an ideal proving ground for fuel and lubricant technology that will be widely used by the general public.

So next time you're filling up your car at one of those iconic red and yellow garages, or buying the branded lubricants, consider this – Fernando Alonso and Felipe Massa have been your own personal test drivers.

F1 Canada Blog - FPI in Montreal

Ten o'clock in the morning, and the pitlane opened with a roar.

While the stands at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve are not quite packed with fans, the turnout is more than respectable for what is technically a working day.

The early part of the session saw little to write home about. Pirelli have given the teams two extra sets of tyres this weekend, as the tyre manufacturer is tweaking its medium compound and wants feedback. So by and large the drivers did installation laps on the new rubber, before moving on to aerodynamic tests.

Because it is the first low-downforce circuit on the calendar, teams have brought new wing configurations to Montreal – both front and rear. The rear wings have been changed to improve downforce, while the fronts are tweaked to maintain overall balance. But as these parts have yet to be tried out on track, a lot of this morning's running will involve flo-viz paint and aero runs so that teams can identify the ideal combination of wings for Sunday's race.

Nearly forty minutes into the session, Lewis Hamilton's morning appeared to be over. The British driver was removing his racing overalls in the McLaren garage while the team's engineers were busy removing his steering column. Before the mechanical failure, Hamilton had topped the timesheets, so McLaren's pace does not appear to be an issue.

But then, pace is one thing the McLaren crew are good at – despite the team gutting his car and trussing it up like a turkey, Hamilton is back out on track before the session is over. While his limited running would appear to preclude a top of the timesheets finish, both Hamilton and teammate Jenson Button will be forces to be reckoned with this weekend.

As will Nico Rosberg and Michael Schumacher, whose Mercedes engines have kept them at or near the top of the timesheets all morning. There are so many position changes throughout free practice that it's foolhardy to attempt to stay on top of all of them, but patterns do emerge. This morning's pattern involves a lot of Mercedes, and a lot of Ferrari. Both Fernando Alonso and Felipe Massa took their turn at the top of the lists during FPI, but were displaced by Rosberg.

Just over an hour after the pitlane opened for business, Sebastian Vettel red-flagged the session. The current world champion planted his car into the Wall of Champions, shedding carbon fibre (and a right front wheel) as he went. The young German driver came through the chicane too quickly, tyres smoking. When he rode the kerbs, he locked up both front wheels, and a crash was inevitable. Fortunately, he is unharmed.

All credit to the marshalls, who managed to get the track clear and reopened within six minutes of the crash.

The light relief – if you can call it that – came early on in the session, courtesy of Lotus driver Jarno Trulli. The Italian racer got into a fight with a bird on one his first forays around the circuit, and lost running time as a result. Unsurprisingly, the bird came off worst, but the team still needed to replace Trulli's sparrow-coated front wing, costing him a bit of time in the pits.

FPI standings (unofficial)

1. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:15.591s [32 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:16.139s [27 laps]
3. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:16.549s [30 laps]
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:16.658s [26 laps]
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:16.676s [20 laps]
6. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:16.842s [19 laps]
7. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:16.990s [28 laps]
8. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1:17.294s [26 laps]
9. Nick Heidfeld (Renault) 1:17.445s [28 laps]
10. Nico Hulkenberg (Force India) 1:17.549s [20 laps]
11. Sergio Perez (Sauber) 1:17.662s [27 laps]
12. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:17.820s [30 laps]
13. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:18.458s [31 laps]
14. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1:18.506s [15 laps]
15. Daniel Ricciardo (Toro Rosso) 1:18.648s [35 laps]
16. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:18.852s [8 laps]
17. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1:18.932s [20 laps]
18. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1:19.274s [29 laps]
19. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1:19.422s [30 laps]
20. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:19.577s [26 laps]
21. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1:19.838s [31 laps]
22. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1:19.960s [23 laps]
23. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:20.520s [21 laps]
24. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1:20.839s [27 laps]

F1 Canada Blog - FP2 in Montreal

The big news of the lunch break comes via Sauber, who have regretfully announced that Sergio Perez will sit out the rest of the Canadian Grand Prix weekend.

Following his dramatic crash during qualifying in Monaco two weeks ago, Perez was given the all-clear to race by the FIA medics. But after getting out of the car at the end of FP1, the Mexican rookie complained of feeling dizzy. Ever wary of potential post-accident problems, Sauber have arranged for Pedro de la Rosa to replace Perez for the duration of the weekend.

As the session got underway, it was hot, clear, and dry at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. Air temperature is hovering around 22 degrees, while the track is a rubber-melting 42 degrees.

After 15 minutes, de la Rosa was the only man yet to complete a timed lap, presumably because he was still being shown all of the new buttons on the Sauber steering wheel - DRS and KERS are both new to the Spanish driver, who raced for the team for most of the 2009 season. Half an hour later, de la Rosa was still in the garage, prompting jokes that the team were desperately searching for his old seat.

The other main story in the early part of the session was Sebastian Vettel's return to the track following an FP1 crash that looked more destructive than it was. With no chassis damage, the team were able to rebuild the world champion's car during the lunch break, and Vettel thanked the team by shooting to the top of the standings with his first flying lap.

The final chicane proved to be something of a trouble-spot, with Pastor Maldonado, Heikki Kovalainen, Nico Rosberg, Lewis Hamilton, and Sebastian Vettel all missing the apex of Turn 14. Timo Glock span came off at Turn 14, and was forced to stop.

Then there were the offs at the Turn 8 chicane, affecting Kovalainen, Rubens Barrichello, Michael Schumacher, and Jaime Alguersuari. Turn 1 was another trouble spot, collecting Kovalainen, Hamilton, Nick Heidfeld, Jarno Trulli, and Narain Karthikeyan.

Just over half-way through the session, Adrian Sutil planted his car into the wall by the Pont de la Concorde, bringing out the yellow flags. He came in too tight to the wall, and ripped off his front left wheel with the contact. The car was still mobile, but the wheel tethers snapped, and there was nothing for Sutil to do but pull over and call it a day.

Within minutes, Kamui Kobayashi brought out the red flags with another bang. He appeared to lose steering, and smacked straight-on into the wall at Turn 4. The Japanese driver is okay, but it's a bad day for Sauber.

Praise is due to the Canadian marshalls, who managed to clear the track in under ten minutes.

And within a minute of the track reopening, Jerome D'Ambrosio brought out the yellow flags, crashing in the same spot as Kobayashi. The yellow flags became red, and the track was closed for business once more.

The marshalls are getting faster - the D'Ambrosio wreckage was cleared and the track reopened within five minutes.

The cause of all these problems is less the track configuration than it is the tyres. The Montreal circuit sees very little action over the course of the year - F1 and a single NASCAR race - and as a consequence the track is greener than Kermit the Frog in his environmentalist phase. Green circuits lead to a loss of grip, hence the slipping and sliding.

While track conditions usually improve over the course of a weekend, the rain predicted for Saturday and Sunday will wash away all of the rubber currently being bedded in. Grip is almost certain to be a constant issue this weekend, and a minimum of one Safety Car is as close as you'll ever get to a sure bet.

With all the crashes, there wasn't much time in the final half hour to do much in the way of running. Fernando Alonso secured the top spot around half-way through the session, and remained there until the chequered flag fell.

You can't read too much into practice times, as a rule, but it is worth pointing out that for the bulk of FP2, the top five slots on the timesheets were occupied by the same five men: Alonso, Vettel, Hamilton, Jenson Button, and Felipe Massa. Only the order changed.

FP2 standings (unofficial)

1. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:15.107s [34 laps]
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:15.476s [29 laps]
3. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:15.601s [33 laps]
4. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:15.977s [26 laps]
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:15.989s [25 laps]
6. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1:16.089s [34 laps]
7. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:16.102s [28 laps]
8. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1:16.324s [32 laps]
9. Nick Heidfeld (Renault) 1:16.422s [32 laps]
10. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:16.687s [28 laps]
11. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1:16.905s [16 laps]
12. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1:16.941s [39 laps]
13. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1:17.051s [32 laps]
14. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:17.684s [34 laps]

15. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:17.757s [20 laps]
 16. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1:18.470s [33 laps]
 17. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1:18.482s [38 laps]
 18. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1:18.536s [14 laps]
 19. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:18.601s [38 laps]
 20. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:19.209s [28 laps]
 21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:19.810s [25 laps]
 22. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1:20.284s [31 laps]
 23. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1:20.311s [38 laps]
 24. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1:20.922s [26 laps]
-

F1 Canada Blog - Friday press conference in Montreal

At Friday's senior team personnel press conference at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Eric Boullier (Lotus-Renault), Pat Fry (Ferrari), Andrew Green (Force India), Paddy Lowe (McLaren), and Sam Michael (Williams) talked about DRS, downforce, Monaco, wet racing, and Bahrain.

While the senior bosses were nearly as reticent as their employees on the Bahrain question, Eric Boullier did acknowledge that the saga had not done its part to improve the general perception of Formula 1.

Asked to recap the situation, the Renault boss – and FOTA vice-chairman – said "I think we have followed what happened in the World Council, the decision which was taken there unanimously. I think the teams have expressed their views in the recent weeks and their concerns, mainly about what we had already agreed, India and the safety issue. I mean the usual one. We decided to write a letter – which was a private one but it became rather public – to the FIA and to Bahrain. You know the rest of the story because it was all public so at the end I think a decision was made and we are happy to be back in Bahrain in due time."

But, he added, "I think reading on the forums and spending some time with the fans you can understand the reaction and you cannot be happy when such mess has been raised and it is not good for the image of Formula 1 definitely."

Another recent F1 controversy – although a minor one in comparison – has been the fan outrage to the end of the Monaco Grand Prix, which was widely perceived to have been "stolen" by an archaic rule allowing tyre changes under red flag conditions.

Sam Michael weighed in.

"I think I can see what you're saying from the fans' point of view, because that part of the race is effectively destroyed, if you like. Very difficult to race. There were three or four different things happening towards the end of that race and they were all knocked on the head. It's not something that happens very often, which is probably why it probably needs a debate and it's probably going to be a long time before it happens again. I agree with the safety factor of being able to change tyres because of punctures, but there were three or four different strategies going on there, with some cars that had taken a hit on their race time such as Hamilton, Maldonado and Ferrari and others that hadn't, such as Kobayashi and Vettel, so clearly those guys were playing the long game, and they were all very exposed at the end of the race and that helped them out, straight away. It can go both ways, with teams, it's more really what does it do to the show?"

"I'm not sure," Michael continued; "it might be a long time before you see it again. In terms of car damage, obviously you take a free repair, because you're allowed to work on your car as soon as the race starts, you can do whatever you want to your car: you can stop and change the set-up if you want to, so it's pretty hard to have a rule that says that just because you're on the grid you can't repair it. And once again, you could pull in the safety arguments, so sometimes you lose from it, sometimes you gain, but maybe it's something that needs a chat about again, but it would be very difficult to get a rule that covers all those situations."

Pat Fry was concerned about potential driver safety issues.

"I suppose the tyre situation... in that sort of situation you don't know if anyone's run over some debris or damaged a tyre in any way, I suppose you could say like Lewis today, for example," he said. "So I think to change tyres is actually sensible and it's a safety issue, really, so I think it's essential that people can. As for how badly damaged your car is, I think that's going to be debated, isn't it? It's been that way for as long as I can remember, which is quite a long time! Again, it does stop you having to take risks. Would you send your car to the pit lane to fix it or do you think that whatever is slightly damaged might last for the five laps left or whatever? Safety-wise, it is best to allow both to happen, I would think."

It was then proposed that in such circumstances, races were cut short and reduced points awarded to the drivers. Paddy Lowe argued that such a proposal would also deny fans a nail-biting end to the race.

"The trouble with both of those solutions is that they deny the race result that everybody was looking forward to," the McLaren man said. "As Sam said, it's a very old rule and very rarely deployed, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't discuss refining it for next time. I think that there probably are ways round the problems that these guys have given. For instance, you could change a tyre if you could show that it was damaged, for instance, or something like that. I think really that the more you could make a restart preserve the state of the race before it was stopped, that's got to be better for the race that the spectators are looking for."

Pirelli's wet tyres have yet to be tested in race conditions, and the team personnel were asked to reflect on the likelihood of a wet race on Sunday.

"We need to see how the forecast firms up over the next 24 hours or less," Lowe said. "Certainly if it's wet on Sunday that will be pretty interesting. We haven't yet had a wet race with the Pirelli tyres, so that will be a new experience for everybody, whether they're taking part or watching, so we will have to see. In terms of what we learned on the dry tyres today, for us it was disrupted somewhat by the double red flags which really meant we didn't get a time on the option tyre and then particularly Lewis punctured his option during that process so he actually had no running on the option,

effectively.”

“I think it will be an interesting Sunday if it’s wet,” Fry said. “There hasn’t been a wet race, as Paddy said and we’re all going to be learning: where are the crossover points between each of the tyres? If it’s a monsoon or very, very wet conditions at the start, can you actually get from the full wet... do you have to use the intermediate before you put the super soft on? It will be interesting, we will be learning as we go along. Today, the track evolved quite a lot. It was very dusty to start with but I think the grip improved with the track. With the supersoft, very, very few people actually got a decent lap on the supersoft, so it’s a little hard to say where the difference between the two tyres is. I think most people were had over twice by the two red lights, so yeah, people were running their tyres with six out- and in-laps or something. I’m not sure of the exact pace difference between the tyres. In terms of degradation and that, it didn’t seem that bad today. If it’s dry, I’m sure the track will be improving, so again, it should be a relatively easy race.”

“The tyres improved significantly for us from P1 to P2 – we saw quite a large drop in wear rates, so I think by the time we get to Sunday, if it stays dry the tyres will be fine,” Michael contributed. “The weather looks like it’s going to be a fifty or sixty percent chance of rain; that was ninety percent a couple of days ago, so it is coming down, but I think it looks pretty likely, and the temperature’s dropping as well, with today being the hottest day. So all those things are going to make Sunday’s race pretty interesting, I think.”

Andy Green was more interested in the new medium compound Pirelli had brought to test on Friday.

“I suppose we found the new medium very consistent, it was a very good tyre,” he said. “We were surprised at the track conditions and the grip level at the beginning of F1. Moving on to the prime and the option, there was obviously a clear difference. I haven’t had a look at all the data yet to see exactly the changes between the two tyres but that they seem reasonably well suited to the track. We’ve always got one eye on the weather. Our set-up will evolve overnight as we get more up-to-date information. It’s going to be an interesting weekend, I think, if all the forecasts pan out.”

The twin DRS zones should also be a contributing factor to an exciting race on Sunday, but those present were reserving judgement on the idea until after the race, when they would see the concept in action for the first time.

“The first zone is longer than the second and would be the natural overtaking place anyway,” Lowe said. “I think we will have to see how that pans out on Sunday. If you manage to make the overtake, which ordinarily would be possible in the first section, then DRS will just give you an advantage in the second section to extend the gap from the guy you just overtook – which may not be the required outcome. That may prevent a re-overtake should the guy not get the best speed through the final corner. But if you don’t make the overtake stick in the first section but manage to get very close, then the second section should help maybe to make it count. We will have to see. I mean it is the first time we have done it so it will be an interesting experiment.”

“I think from our point of view DRS does have an effect as what we used to do in the past was race a level of drag that was maybe seven or eight kilometres quicker than your optimum lap time to make sure you could overtake and not be overtaken,” Michael contributed. “You would lose lap time off your optimum. We tend not to do that now and that is what’s really pushed us towards one set of wings and it looks like Montreal is not going to be an exception to that but we haven’t made our final decision.”

Finally, according to Michael, a low downforce set-up in Montreal isn’t as important as it once was.

“We did bring a lower drag rear wing but we are not sure if we will race that yet,” he said. “I think we are in a similar state as everyone else in that you tend to race a much higher level of downforce in Montreal than what you are used to.”

F1 Canada Blog - FP3 in Montreal

The weather in Montreal just can’t seem to make up its mind. The skies are grey, then blue, then cloudy, and the predicted rain is now not expected till after qualifying.

As the final practice session at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve got underway, track temperature was 27 degrees, a full 15 degrees cooler than Friday afternoon. Air temperature is a moderate 22 degrees, and humidity levels are climbing steadily.

With very little action on track in the early part of the session, all eyes were on the Le Mans endurance race, currently taking place on the other side of the ocean. Allan McNish’s crash elicits gasps of horror, and concern for photographers caught in the path of flying debris.

After a Friday filled with red flags, some teams are behind on their planned programmes for the weekend, and not all tyre compounds have been used. But there is still a reluctance to leave the pits too early, brief installation laps aside. Twenty minutes in to the session, only seven drivers have set timed laps.

Mark Webber spent the first 20 minutes of the morning sitting in the garage before the team announced that there was a battery issue with the Australian’s KERS device. The team have struggled with KERS all season, with at least one driver suffering at least a temporary failure in every race weekend thus far.

The combination of Mercedes engine and KERS appears to be a huge boon here in Montreal, thanks to the long straights that make up the race track. The first man to top the timesheets this morning was Nico Rosberg, who ceded the top spot to Jenson Button, also powered by a Mercedes engine.

But Button’s time at the top was very short-lived, and the British driver was dethroned by Ferrari drivers Felipe Massa and Fernando Alonso, and usual pole-sitter Sebastian Vettel. Rosberg pushes Vettel down into P2, and becomes the first man to break into the 1.13s. To put that in perspective, the 2010 pole lap in Canada was 1.15.105s.

Half an hour into the session, and Lewis Hamilton’s first timed lap is good enough for P6, two-tenths down on his teammate. Webber is still stuck in the garage while the team attempt to get his KERS back up and running, while Jerome D’Ambrosio is the only other man yet to have put a time on the

board.

With just over ten minutes remaining, the top four drivers were separated by a single tenth, with Rosberg and Alonso both on 1.13.919s. Massa was 0.037s behind, and Vettel was 0.101s slower than Massa. Webber remained in the garage, yet to complete a single lap.

Once Alonso got comfortable on the supersofts, however, he was able to pull out a 0.218s advantage over Rosberg, setting a 1.13.701s that was only bested in the final minutes of FP3. Once out on the supersofts, Vettel was up to his usual tricks and crossed the line in 1.13.381s.

All efforts to best Vettel's time came to nought, as Pedro de la Rosa brought out the red flags with a crash at Turn 4 just as the countdown clock reached 0.00s. There's not much point in red-flagging a session once it's over, but rules are rules.

FP3 timings (unofficial)

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1.13.381s [21 laps]
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1.13.701s [21 laps]
3. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1.13.919s [29 laps]
4. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1.13.956s [20 laps]
5. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1.14.335s [18 laps]
6. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1.14.469s [16 laps]
7. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1.14.488s [23 laps]
8. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1.14.917s [23 laps]
9. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.15.217s [18 laps]
10. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.15.243s [17 laps]
11. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.15.312s [19 laps]
12. Nick Heidfeld (Renault) 1.15.350s [22 laps]
13. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.16.138s [17 laps]
14. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.16.145s [19 laps]
15. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.16.236s [21 laps]
16. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.16.438s [21 laps]
17. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.16.706s [22 laps]
18. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.17.093s [21 laps]
19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.17.523s [24 laps]
20. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1.18.910s [20 laps]
21. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.19.073s [19 laps]
22. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.19.213s [22 laps]
23. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.20.475s [19 laps]
24. Mark Webber (Red Bull) NO TIME SET

F1 Canada Blog - Q1 in Montreal

As the teams prepare for Saturday qualifying at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, weather radars point towards a dry session, with rain due to fall later this afternoon.

Track temperature is still cool, at 25 degrees, while the air temperature has stayed at a consistent 22 degrees since the morning session. The only number climbing ever higher is that of the humidity levels, and some teams are hedging their bets with a wet set-up for qualifying and the race.

Following KERS problems in the morning session, Red Bull driver Mark Webber will see his first running of the day in Q1. But if teammate Sebastian Vettel's pace is anything to go by, both Red Bull drivers are likely to qualify high up Sunday's grid.

As the timed laps begin to appear on screen, the usual suspects are fighting it out at the top. Teams that showed pace in FP3 have not lost it over lunch, and it's unlikely that Q1 will claim any scalps from Red Bull, Ferrari, McLaren, Renault, or Mercedes.

Towards the back of the pack, there is a very real risk that both Virgin and HRT will fall foul of the 107 percent rule; both teams have struggled to lap within the required parameters in practice. With the long straight on offer in Montreal, the lack of KERS is a real disadvantage.

Half-way through the session, Jerome D'Ambrosio is outside the 107 percent needed, while Narain Karthikeyan is safe by the smallest of margins. As the pace accelerates at the head of the pack, the list of drivers at risk increases steadily.

Pedro de la Rosa scrubs the wall and sends sparks flying, but manages to avoid a repeat of the morning's crash.

Jaime Alguersuari locks up while trying to best Heikki Kovalainen's time; both men are in the dropout zone. But despite a flat spot, the young Spaniard completes the lap in good time and moves up to P17, temporarily safe.

Karthikeyan manages to lift himself out of disqualification and into the race with a 1.18.736s, safe for a Sunday slot provided the front runners remain in the pits. And with only 30 seconds remaining on the clock, that's a pretty safe bet.

Dropout zone

18. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1.16.294s
19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1.16.745s

20. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1.16.786s
 21. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1.18.424s
 22. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1.18.537s
 23. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1.18.574s
 24. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1.19.414s - DNQ
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F1 Canada Blog - Q2 in Montreal

Thanks to an impressive Q1 performance from Lotus drivers Jarno Trulli and Heikki Kovalainen, much of the mid-field was pressured into using a set of the option tyres to ensure a slot in Q2. With the ever-present threat of rain, the pitlane empties as the green light goes on, with drivers heading out to set a banker on the supersoft compound while they are able to do so, traffic be damned.

Five minutes in to the session, and Felipe Massa is the only one of 17 runners yet to set a time. Rubens Barrichello is nearly ten seconds off the pace with his first timed lap, and it's a close-run battle at the front with three men on 1.13.6s, and three on 1.13.9s.

Massa finally crosses the line with a 1.17.987s, a disappointing result from a pair of supersofts that came about as a consequence of missing the apex of Turn 14 and running very wide indeed. But the Brazilian's second effort is much improved, putting him in the 1.13.9s club.

Third time is obviously the charm for Massa, who goes fastest with a 1.13.431s, 0.055s faster than P2 man Sebastian Vettel.

With just over five minutes remaining, Kamui Kobayashi, Paul di Resta, Adrian Sutil, Sebastien Buemi, Pastor Maldonado, Pedro de la Rosa, and Rubens Barrichello are all in the dropout zone. All bar Buemi are out on track, fighting for a spot in Q3.

While the Renault pair are in P9 and P10, they have half a second in hand over the men in the dropout zone. Not safe, exactly, but not at risk of falling thanks to an improvement of a tenth somewhere else on the field.

Kobayashi was pushing too hard to claim the half-second needed for a spot in Q3, and ran wide over kerbs and grass, trashing his tyres in the process. There's not enough time remaining for a return to the pits, tyre change, out-lap, and flyer, so it looks almost certain that the Sauber driver will be out at the end of this session.

The seven in the dropout zone have spent the past two minutes trading position within P11-P17, but none have yet been able to break into the top ten, which is still three-tenths away. Nick Heidfeld is out on track, trying to defend his margin.

And with the session now over, the only change is to position.

Dropout zone

11. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1.14.752s
 12. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1.15.043s
 13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1.15.285s
 14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1.15.287s
 15. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1.15.334s
 16. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1.15.361s
 17. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1.15.587s
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F1 Canada Blog - Q3 in Montreal

As the pitlane opens for the final round of Canadian qualifying, the floor of the press room trembles with the passing engines.

Felipe Massa was on top form in the last session, after a shaky start, but Q3 is certain to be an all-out battle between the five teams invited: Ferrari, McLaren, Mercedes, Red Bull, and Renault, each of which have both drivers out on track.

Well, they will do once Mercedes leave the pits.

Nick Heidfeld is first to set a time, crossing the line in 1.15.721s, unsurprisingly he is dethroned as soon as the competition set their timed laps. The benchmark we're looking for this afternoon is the low 1.13s, and possibly even a high 1.12s if someone nails together a perfect lap.

Rubens Barrichello held the lap record here, set in 2004, but that lap time has been beaten time and time again today, starting in FP3.

At the session's mid-point, Sebastian Vettel is the predictable pace-setter, with a 1.13.014s. Massa is his closest rival, on 1.13.292s, while Fernando Alonso is in P3 with a 1.13.412s. Only Michael Schumacher has yet to set a time, and the German legend is out on track.

With everyone but Petrov out on track, Vettel appears to feel the pressure from the Scuderia, and heads out for a second flying lap. But there's no need to defend his provisional pole, and the German's time remains unchanged.

Schumacher crosses the line in 1.18.049s, nearly a second clear of the 107 percent time set in Q1, but not good enough for Q3. His second run is much better, and sees Schumacher in P8 with a 1.13.864s.

Alonso posts a 1:13.199s, which is good enough for a provisional slot on the front row. The chequered flag has fallen, but there are still men out on track waiting to cross the line for the final time.

Provisional grid

1. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) 1:13.014s
2. Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) 1:13.199s
3. Felipe Massa (Ferrari) 1:13.217s
4. Mark Webber (Red Bull) 1:13.429s
5. Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) 1:13.565s
6. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes) 1:13.814s
7. Jenson Button (McLaren) 1:13.838s
8. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes) 1:13.864s
9. Nick Heidfeld (Renault) 1:14.063s
10. Vitaly Petrov (Renault) 1:14.085s
11. Paul di Resta (Force India) 1:14.752s
12. Pastor Maldonado (Williams) 1:15.043s
13. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber) 1:15.285s
14. Adrian Sutil (Force India) 1:15.287s
15. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso) 1:15.334s
16. Rubens Barrichello (Williams) 1:15.361s
17. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber) 1:15.587s
18. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso) 1:16.294s
19. Jarno Trulli (Lotus) 1:16.745s
20. Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) 1:16.786s
21. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT) 1:18.424s
22. Timo Glock (Virgin) 1:18.537s
23. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT) 1:18.574s

Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin) 1:19.414s – DNQ*

*107 percent time: 1:18.989s

F1 Canada Blog - Saturday press conference in Montreal

Strategy, tyres, and inclement weather. It's not easy being an F1 driver in Montreal, even if you did make it to the front of Sunday's grid.

Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull), Fernando Alonso (Ferrari), and Felipe Massa (Ferrari) brave the media after qualifying at the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve.

Vettel was thrilled to be on pole, his sixth in the season's seven races. The current world champion wasn't expecting another Saturday walkover in Canada.

"Going into this weekend we know that probably this is not our strongest circuit," the young German said. "We like high-speed corners. You don't necessarily find much of them here but still we managed to have the fastest package today, to do the best job, so I think we can be very confident. The runs we had, they looked very promising. I think the pace is there in the car. Surely it is never easy and it won't be easy tomorrow but I think like the last two races we are also ready to fight so we will see what happens tomorrow."

After damaging his car on Friday and losing track time as a consequence, Vettel was even less confident in his chances pre-qualifying.

"I need to make sure it doesn't become a habit to crash the car on Friday and be on pole on Saturday," Vettel joked. "I think the Friday bit, obviously, the target is to do many laps without damaging the car. I think the team worked very hard. Initially there was not much chance I would say, or hope, to go out again in the second session. They fixed it very quickly. Fortunately there wasn't too much damage and we had the whole of P2 so that was very good and very important also for today.

"This place you really need to get into the rhythm as in the end to squeeze everything out of your car this is a rough track with the kerbs and so on," he continued. "As I said, it is important to have a couple of laps to find that rhythm and in qualifying we had a good feeling in Q1, Q2 and probably knew that putting things together a little bit more we can improve another bit for Q3. Still I think we saw in Q1 and Q2 we are not going around and joking so it has been very, very close. Q3 again not much."

Ferrari are celebrating their best qualifying result of the season thus far, with Alonso in P2 and Massa in P3.

"I think it was a good qualifying for us," Massa said. "I think we had a good car yesterday straight away. It looked competitive compared to the other tracks, even compared to all the teams that were always in front of us straight away like McLaren, for example. We were not 100 per cent sure that it was really like that but this morning we saw as well that our car is competitive. We can drive with better grip and we are much closer to Sebastian, to Red Bull, compared to the other tracks as well.

"I think it was a good qualifying," the Brazilian driver continued. "It was a good day for us and shows that we need to carry on in that direction to make the car quicker and quicker all the time. It is also true that this track is maybe a little bit better for our car. Tomorrow is tomorrow. Maybe it is raining, maybe not. We don't know but we need to be ready and starting in a good position. It is good on the dry and good on the wet so hope we can have a good day tomorrow as well."

Sunday's predicted rain was on everyone's mind this afternoon.

"We brought some rain tyres and I brought a coat and an umbrella," Vettel teased. "To be honest, there's not much more we can do now. We cannot touch the cars. If anything, we had to make our bed before qualifying, so car-wise the only things we can change now are small things and the tyres. And then we will see what happens. We will see how strong the rain will be, how long it will be and it's also predicted to be quite windy, not very hot, but usually either heat or a lot of wind makes the circuit dry quickly so it depends. I think at the moment if you look at different weather forecasts, they all say something different, so I think the best thing is to wake up tomorrow morning, look outside and see how we are.

"I don't think there's anybody who can give you a guarantee on the weather," the Red Bull driver continued. "We have had the experience that it changes. If you look at the last three days, it changed a lot today. Going into this weekend it was supposed to be completely wet. Today the rain has shifted and moved around, so it's a bit unclear when there will be rain. If you look up, it doesn't really look like a sunny day, so there will be rain, the question is how much and when? Surely, there will be some tomorrow morning. It can change quickly around here, I'm told, so I think we will have to wait and see but nevertheless we will see a very exciting Grand Prix here as usual, with different strategies."

"As Felipe said, the forecast so far is for rain tomorrow," Alonso contributed. "We've never run all together, in race conditions, all the cars this year. We did a couple of laps in the Barcelona test but not all the teams were there, and we did a couple of laps in China, but some ran on Friday and some waited in the garage, so maybe tomorrow will be the first time that we see all the cars together with the new Pirelli wet tyres, so let's wait and see what the pace is. We also can't forget McLaren. I think that in spite of the qualifying position, with the set-up that they have, the speeds that they have, they are probably running with a lot of downforce, so in wet conditions I think they can become very competitive, so it will be a tough competition tomorrow but it will be nice for you to watch, maybe more stress for us but that's OK."

Should it rain, or alternate between sun and shower during the race, tyre strategy is going to be even more complex than usual.

"After six races we have more experience with tyres," Alonso noted. "The soft tyre, in particular, we have used so far in the whole championship, all the races, the same soft tyre and the supersoft experience from Monaco as well. Yesterday, we got some information on the long runs, so we should have a much better idea now after a couple of races in the championship, how they behave and how the tyres behave. Anyway, every Sunday is a different strategy or a different possibility, depending on how the first corner goes, which position you are in. So normally you have to react to some other strategy. If someone running in eighth position stops and goes very quickly, you need to react, you need to stop again because, if not, he overtakes you. Even if you have a perfect plan or an idea, the strategy this year is always very flexible.

"I don't think the tyres will be a problem tomorrow if it's dry," the Spanish driver continued. "What, for sure, is a more interesting or chaotic race is if there are safety cars and things like that. We have seen two or three red flags already this weekend. If this happens in the race or if there is a safety car period, then different strategies appear, if you chose to stop, if you chose to stay out. You need to make the right call and be a little bit lucky. Same in wet conditions. If it's wet, right call, right tyres at the right moment. So the luck factor tomorrow is quite important."

"Tomorrow is a different ballpark and very likely to rain so I am quite happy as we brought rain tyres," Vettel chipped in. "We are as prepared as we can be. This is always a very long race with a lot of things to happen. We have seen from the last two races in particular it will be very close so we don't expect anything else than that."

Finally, Vettel spoke pragmatically about KERS, in light of Red Bull's consistent problems with the device.

"The thing is that if I have a [KERS] problem, then I have no choice. I can't stop and say 'OK, recharge' or whatever. So far this weekend, as I've said, I've had no problems and it looks as good as it can be. You never know. You can ask these two if by any chance their engine would blow up tomorrow. I think the chances are very low but you never know, so, surely, with our KERS, there's a bigger risk than probably the Ferrari engine blowing up. Mark obviously still had a problem this afternoon. I think they could be able to fix it tonight; we will have to wait and see. At this stage I think it's too early. It would be very difficult [to win the race without KERS]. Here, I think the effect of KERS is quite big, both to attack and to defend in the race situation. Yes, we have the rear wing so I think that makes a bigger difference than the KERS but still, I think you can check some of the other races. In Barcelona I had it on and off in the race and I felt more uncomfortable when it didn't work so I would love to have it, yes."

F1 Canada Blog - The Canadian Grand Prix as it happened

Something of a damp squib, this start. After a drizzly morning in Montreal, the FIA confirmed that the Canadian Grand Prix would start behind the Safety Car. The drag reduction system (DRS) has also been disabled in the interests of safety. All drivers began the race on the full-wet tyres, and teams are expecting heavy rain within half an hour of the race start.

Before the race it was announced that Toro Rosso driver Jaime Alguersuari would be starting from the pitlane, following changes to the car made post-qualifying. The young Spanish driver changed the upper flap on his rear wing, the gurney on his lower rear wing, and his front torsion bars, as well as making adjustments to his overall suspension configuration in anticipation of a wet race.

After four laps of not much action, the Safety Car has been called into the pits for the beginning of lap 5, meaning the racing can at last begin in earnest.

At the proper start, Fernando Alonso and Sebastian Vettel battle for the lead as Mark Webber spins and returns to the track. Webber's spin took Lewis Hamilton out with him, but the McLaren driver recovered, loss of position aside. On the replays, it looks like Hamilton was attempting to pass the Australian when he came into contact with the back of the Red Bull, spinning him like a top.

The stewards have announced they are investigating the incident.

Webber's spin allows the two Mercedes drivers to get ahead of the McLaren pair, while Force India driver Paul di Resta gets a good start and pops up in

P8.

Michael Schumacher bumps Jenson Button off track as the latter attempts a pass, but the Briton loses nothing more than a second or two.

Eight laps in and the two McLarens collide, bringing out the Safety Car. Hamilton's race is over; Button pits for a new wing and a set of inters, and returns to the track in P14. It looks like Button turned in on his teammate, who was attempting a clean pass, but it's hard to know for sure.

Stewards announce no further action on the Webber-Hamilton incident. Instead, they have turned their attention to the incident between the two McLaren drivers.

Making a bad day worse, the stewards are now announcing that Button and Hamilton are under investigation for breaking the Safety Car speed limit.

Safety Car called in at the end of lap 12, and racing might just restart before the rain falls. The clouds are looking very menacing.

Drive-through penalty for Button, who broke the Safety Car speed limit. McLaren may as well pack up and go home now.

While the first laps at the real race start caused a certain amount of chaos and interest, the drivers at the front now seem to have settled into a more cautious rhythm. There's been no change at the head of the pack, and Vettel is nursing a 5.1s lead over Alonso in P2.

Teams are now looking at a switch to inters, citing drying conditions on track, but a quick look at the stands shows more umbrellas being raised, not closed. Full wets might be the way to go for a few laps longer.

Alonso is the first of the frontrunners to pit, handing P2 to teammate Felipe Massa. Michael Schumacher is in P3, with Kobayashi in P4, and Webber in P5. None of the current top five have pitted. I typed too soon - Schumacher pits from P3, and returns to the track in P11. Alonso is already up to P5 following his earlier stop.

The stewards have announced that the Button-Hamilton incident will be investigated after the race.

Lap 20, and the Safety Car is back on track. The drizzle has become a downpour, and the drivers pile into the pits for hardier rubber. Or full wets, whatever you want to call it.

Vettel pits from the lead at the end of lap 19, and rejoins in P2. Webber follows him in for a set of full wets, and returns in P7. One lap later, Massa pits from the lead, putting Vettel back at the head of the pack. Massa rejoins in P3, with Kamui Kobayashi up to P2.

Race leader Vettel gets on the radio to say that the track is undriveable between Turn 9 and Turn 13. The Red Bull driver appears to be pushing for a delayed restart, if not an outright cancellation. One lap later, and Vettel's back on the radio saying he is driving blind, can't see the backs of other cars, and is worried he'll crash.

The Safety Car is back out - again! - and race control appear to be considering the wisdom of carrying on.

The rain is now a torrent. The spectators look miserable, the drivers aren't happy, and conditions aren't likely to improve for at least 20 minutes. Button adds his voice to the chorus of drivers complaining about conditions in messages intended for the ears of race control.

Twenty-five laps in, and the race is red-flagged due to the inclement weather.

We have been waiting hours for a restart, and all the fun's on Twitter. Well, on Twitter and in the Mountie-filled media catering tent. Here's my Twitter commentary of the break for you to enjoy:

@FlKate: Rain, rain, go away. Let us race on this Sunday.

@FlKate: Red Bull now reporting that the rain is set to intensify before it lets off. Yay.

RT @MikeGascoyne: With the time left and the lap times in the wet we calculate we can do around 43 laps so will be close to full distance when we restart

@FlKate: Met Ken Block this morning, lovely guy. Pity he's not got his car with him; we could have some awesome stunts while we wait for FL.

@FlKate: Sauber say rain will stop in around 50 minutes. Eek.

@FlKate: Rihanna hugs Lewis, press room goes 'awwww'.

@FlKate: The clock's been stopped, so I think it can run as long as there's still TV to show it. Rain pending, of course.

@FlKate: Di Resta's doing a good job for the British contingent, at least! And Kobayashi is rocking my cotton socks.

@FlKate: HRT announce that it's raining. Press room clap. Where would we be without their informed commentary?

@FlKate: There are mounties in the media catering tent. MOUNTIES! That's made my day.

@FlKate: One of them looked a lot like @LewisHamilton. Very odd. Thought he'd slipped into some dry clothes!

@FlKate: Race will restart in 15 minutes.

@FlKate: Restart will be behind Safety Car; all drivers to start on wet tyres.

So, five minutes to go. The grid is looking busy, and the heavens open on cue. Total timing fail, universe.

The race was red flagged two hours ago. Should be starting up again in 90 seconds, if all goes according to plan. But the best laid plans of mice and men, etc...

And they're off! Slowly, behind the Safety Car, but off nonetheless. Twenty-six of seventy laps complete, and approximately 99.99 percent of those have seen the drivers admiring the brake lights of an SLS. And yes, there might have been a wee bit of exaggeration in that last sentence.

The on-boards are showing it's not really bikini weather out there. Expect to see a lot more of the Safety Car, and not much in the way of racing.

Lap 28, and Bernd's still leading the race. How long till he breaks the race laps led record? What with Monaco and Montreal 2011, Korea 2010, and a host of accidents over the years, he can't be far off...

Not much is going on, by the way. Action doesn't really occur when Bernd's in charge of the track.

And as I type, Heikki Kovalainen radios the team with driveshaft troubles. He's told to stay in gear and box, and limps slowly round the track. His sector times are double that of the competition – 62.1s in sector 1, vs 30ish seconds for the rest of the pack.

Kovalainen makes it to the pits at the end of lap 30, and is wheeled back into the garage. The Finnish driver has retired from the race.

Lap 32, and we're still admiring the Safety Car. It's getting a bit sunnier out there, but the cars are still kicking up huge plumes of water. No word yet from race control about a return to racing, but there's no way the cars can go full distance in the 58 minutes left on the clock.

Finally, on lap 34, race control announce that the Safety Car will be coming in this lap. There are 56 minutes left, and we've yet to reach half distance.

Massa takes Kobayashi on the restart, but the Sauber driver reclaims his position.

There's a run for the pits to change to inters, and position changes are mad and impossible to follow. D'Ambrosio is given a drive-through penalty for being on the wrong tyres.

Lap 37 and there's a snarl-up on the hairpin. Doesn't look like there was any contact, but four cars were fighting for the same spot.

Fernando Alonso brings out yet another Safety Car, parking his car in the wall at Turn 4, the same spot that proved problematic throughout practice. Button and Alonso made contact, the Ferrari driver span into the wall, and the Briton appears to have sustained damage to his front right tyre, if not his whole car. The McLaren driver is crawling towards the pits in P2, and leaves in the same position.

Alonso has officially retired.

Lap 40, and race control announce that Bernd is in again this lap. Racing will resume on lap 41.

And with the racing back on, Kobayashi manages to gold on to his lead over Massa, the last Ferrari standing. The FIA are reporting that the track surface is slippery. In other news, snow is cold, rain is wet, and the sun is hot.

The stewards have announced that they will be investigating the Button-Alonso incident after the race.

This race is officially carnage. Every time I look down to type, someone else has been pranged. Di Resta takes a hit, as do Webber, Rosberg, and Sutil. Sutil is also hit with a drive-through for overtaking behind the Safety Car.

Lap 45, and only 37 minutes left on the clock. With 35 laps left to go, we're looking at half points this afternoon.

Massa is pushing hard on Kobayashi, but can't get past.

Race control have just announced that DRS has been enabled. Massa is 0.6s behind Kobayashi, so this could be his chance to overtake.

Keeping busy, race control have just announced that the Heidfeld-di Resta contact is under investigation by the stewards. This is going to be a very long night for everyone in the paddock, while all these penalties are resolved.

Michael Schumacher is now running in P4, having managed to get past Nick Heidfeld. Jenson Button has clawed his way back up to P12 after his Alonso accident and subsequent pit stop.

Adding to the late night, the stewards are now investigating the Rosberg-Sutil incident. Should they just issue the whole grid with a 20s penalty and be done with it?

Paul di Resta has been issued with a drive-through for causing a collision.

Schumacher manages to pass the battling Massa and Kobayashi, and is running in P2. Massa gets past Kobayashi, pushing the Japanese driver off the podium, but the Sauber driver is fighting to reclaim his position.

Schumacher's pass was a thing of beauty, a perfectly-timed use of his DRS to slip past two distracted opponents. Well done, sir!

Sutil has retired, although I missed whatever caused it. End of lap 49, fact fans, so that was four laps ago. This race is pure chaos, of the most exciting sort.

It's madness at the front, and the timing screens can't keep up. The frontrunners have stopped for slicks, and the order on lap 55 is Vettel, Schumacher, Webber, Kobayashi, Button.

Massa has been sliding back, thanks to a dangling front wing. He pits for a replacement, and is a long way from the podium finish he'd hoped for.

Lap 56, and Heidfeld is out following a dance with Kobayashi and the wall. But he managed to stop his car on an escape road, so it's yellow flags for debris, not another Safety Car.

Button has been collecting fastest laps, and is now up in P4.

I typed too soon – the dreaded Safety Car is back on track. No more cups of tea for Bernd.

We're on lap 57 of a 70 lap race, and there are only 19 minutes remaining on the clock. When – if – the race restarts, Baby Schumi will have the original Schumacher breathing down his neck. The Mercedes DRS should give the elder German a slight advantage – Vettel's umpteenth win of the season is by no means assured.

Lap 59, and a marshal falls over in front of an HRT! There's no collision, fortunately.

Less than fifteen minutes to go, and eleven laps remaining. How many more of these will be under the Safety Car? Race control confirm that the Safety Car will be in at the end of lap 60, so with any luck the race will end with some racing. Will wonders never cease?

The race restarts, but Schumacher doesn't get past Vettel on the first corner. It will be a tense run to the finish. Webber is in P3, with Button – seemingly on a mission this afternoon – putting on the pressure. Kobayashi is in P5.

Pastor Maldonado appears to have retired, bringing out the yellow flags. He stopped on track at Turn 1, but managed to do so without bringing out the Safety Car.

Mark Webber makes it past Schumacher for P2, but messes up the corner exit, runs off track, and hands back the place immediately. Button is on Webber's tail, and it's a five-way fight for the three podium spots.

And Webber does it again, this time handing a place to Button, now running in P3.

There are 6.5 minutes left of this race, and six laps. We're not going full distance, but I think we knew that all along.

Button passes Schumacher for P2, but the German elder statesman is still on course for his first podium since his comeback. As soon as he slips past, Button pulls out a good-sized lead over Schumacher and Webber. Button is 3s behind Vettel, and 2s a lap faster. This could be a nail-biter.

Four minutes remaining, and four laps to go...

Button is now 1.6s down on Vettel. His girlfriend is dancing around the garage.

Webber manages to get past Schumacher, and there are three laps (and 3 minutes) left. Schumacher is off the podium.

Apparently Kobayashi and Petrov had an incident, and it's going to be investigated. Didn't see it, I'm afraid.

Two minutes remaining, and only Button can stop Vettel from running away with this one. The gap is around one second.

Di Resta has retired, but managed to park his car far enough away from the track that racing can continue. Good lad!

Less than a minute to go, and Button is closing on Vettel down the pit straight. Even with DRS, this is going to be a tough sell. We're on the last lap, and Vettel nearly clips the wall. Button passes him on track with less than 10 seconds remaining.

Only McLaren have been able to beat Vettel this year.

Button takes the chequered flag, but he could yet lose the win, as he's got a stewards' investigation pending after the race.

Massa and Kobayashi cross the line in a photo finish for P6 and P7, with Massa coming out (just) ahead.

Canadian Grand Prix race result (unofficial)

1. Jenson Button (McLaren)
2. Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull)
3. Mark Webber (Red Bull)
4. Michael Schumacher (Mercedes)
5. Vitaly Petrov (Renault)
6. Felipe Massa (Ferrari)
7. Kamui Kobayashi (Sauber)
8. Jaime Alguersuari (Toro Rosso)
9. Rubens Barrichello (Williams)
10. Sebastien Buemi (Toro Rosso)
11. Nico Rosberg (Mercedes)
12. Pedro de la Rosa (Sauber)
13. Tonio Liuzzi (HRT)
14. Narain Karthikeyan (HRT)
15. Jerome D'Ambrosio (Virgin)
16. Timo Glock (Virgin)
17. Jarno Trulli (Lotus)

Paul di Resta (Force India) RET

Pastor Maldonado (Williams) RET

Nick Heidfeld (Renault) RET
Adrian Sutil (Force India) RET
Fernando Alonso (Ferrari) RET
Heikki Kovalainen (Lotus) RET
Lewis Hamilton (McLaren) RET

F1 Canada Blog - Sunday press conference in Montreal

Based on the focus of media attention, you'd be forgiven for thinking there was only one man in the post-race press conference at the Canadian Grand Prix, but joining Jenson Button (McLaren) were Sebastian Vettel (Red Bull) and Mark Webber (Red Bull).

Jenson Button was bubbling over with enthusiasm for what will almost certainly be the most impressive race drive of his career. His charge from the back will take some beating, whether he retires tomorrow or in twenty years' time.

"I really do not know what to say," Button began. "It has been a very emotional three hours or however long it has been since the start. The incident with Lewis... I couldn't see anything when he was alongside me. I couldn't see anything in my mirrors. It was one of those things and I have apologised to him. Then, it was really a fight. I got a drive-through for speeding behind the safety car and I had to fight my way through about three times. Eventually, on the last lap I was chasing down Seb. He ran a little bit wide onto the wet part of the circuit and I was able to take the opportunity and take the win. But, for me, a fantastic race I think even if I hadn't won today I would have enjoyed this race immensely. But, yeah, amazing win and possibly my best.

"It felt like I spent more time in the pits than on the pit-straight," he added. "The guys did a great job of calling the strategy. At some points we definitely lucked out on the strategy, especially when the red flag came out but we called it very well going to slicks. The car was working really well in these tricky conditions, so I enjoyed it very much coming through the field. Fighting your way through the field is almost as good as winning a race: that feeling of getting one up on someone. A great race I think for the people who are sat here. To be on the podium was a pretty exceptional result and to fight my way through from, I think, last position... yeah, it's definitely my best race and I want to say a big thank you to the whole team for staying calm in some very difficult circumstances, especially when I damaged the front left and the front wing. But we came away with the victory, so thank you very much.

"I wouldn't have had a chance if we didn't have DRS here," the McLaren driver continued. "If Sebastian didn't make a mistake it would have been very tricky but it was getting very close to making the move because of the DRS. The previous lap I got DRS and I wasn't really close enough to make a move but I felt I was creeping closer and it could have been one of those moves on the last lap into the last corner but it didn't go that far because Seb put a wheel onto the wet surface and ran wide. I will take that. I think after Monaco, which again was a great race for me, to get the win here and get some luck in the end I think we deserved that."

The Canadian race was "the most action I've had in a grand prix, probably, and come away with a win," Button added. "My first grand prix win was pretty special as it always would be and it was a very similar situation with the weather but I would personally say this - I'm going to say that because I'm emotionally attached to this win because it's just happened - but I would say this race is the best one I've had in my career.

Lest you think it was the non-stop Button show, the Red Bull pair did get a minor look-in when it came to the questions.

Vettel was asked to describe the disappointment of losing a race on the final lap.

"Of course you are disappointed," the young German said. "I think it was a very difficult race from start to finish and we led every single lap except the last one. Or part of the last one. I was probably too conservative when I was in the lead after the last safety car and didn't open the gap quite enough. I was trying to hold the gap to the cars behind. Then I saw Jenson coming through. I was pushing and I think it would have been enough to the end but obviously it was not as I did a mistake.

"It is clearly down to me," Vettel admitted. "I locked up the rear a little bit and what you have to do then is open the car going a bit straighter when there is only one line. But I ended up in the wet and it was quite easy then for him to pass. Surely, I think it is a good day today. It was a difficult day, easy to do mistakes and we have seen a lot of cars not finishing so it is good points. But if you have got it in your hands and you give it away it is not the sweetest feeling, but all in all it was a good race for us.

"I think it was a long race," he continued. "Obviously, a long break in between but very difficult conditions. It was quite tough and I think one of the most challenging races we have had this year. All in all, I think I can be satisfied but at the moment the freshest impressions I have are the ones which I probably show at the moment.

"Of course I am disappointed," Vettel said, warming to his theme. "Being in the lead for all the race and knowing that it was so difficult. It was a tricky race. The safety car never helped us but we did the best we could. It is good points today. I can see that. It is important to finish, especially in a race like that, but to do the mistake in the last lap, which was probably only the real mistake I did in the whole race, at the moment it is not very sweet. But that's how it goes. I think we are all pushing very hard and sometimes do mistakes. I have no problem to admit that I went a little bit wide and if it would have been dry there would have been no problem. But like this it was wet and outside the dry line and very costly. So in the end I got away with second."

Asked to explain his last lap error, Vettel said "I was a little bit late on the brakes. Obviously I could feel Jenson was a little bit quicker than us. I should probably have pushed much harder initially after the safety car, after the restart. I was building up something like a four second lead and then I thought that the people behind would run a similar pace so I wasn't trying to pull away too much because I don't know what might happen afterwards with tyres or another safety car phase. I was probably a bit too cautious there. If I would have pulled away by six or seven seconds then it would have been a different story, but like that, at some stage, it was only three. It was a difficult finish to a hard race. I could see that especially in the last sector, Jenson was coming very close and catching up a lot."

Webber wasn't given much time on the microphone, but he managed to get a few good soundbites out of limited airtime.

"I think Lewis thought the chequered flag was in Turn 3," the Australian driver said. "We made contact, I tried to give him some room. I know it's easy to clip someone but I think it was a bit clumsy that early in the race. So I lost a lot of positions. I managed to get them all back, pretty much, and then we decided to pit, obviously just to put another set of full extremes on before the suspended race. Then obviously Kobayashi and the two Renaults and di Resta – the guys that I passed already – they got me with the free pit stop, basically under the suspended race with the new set of tyres. So I had to get back past those guys which wasn't too bad but when a dry line started to appear, it's actually difficult to pull moves off because there's not much room to get down the inside.

"I think I decided to roll the dice a little bit and pop some dry tyres on," Webber continued. "It was very much on the edge. I knew parts of the track were going to be tricky initially, and if you get on the grass, obviously, it's all over. So that tended to work out for me, gained quite a few seconds with that and then arrived on the back of Michael and we had a reasonable battle, same thing, trying to get that dry line in the last chicane. Eventually we got him, but JB arrived, he was very very very quick and I think he would ultimately – even if I got Michael early – JB would probably have picked me off as well. It was very easy to be in the wall today, make a mistake.

"It's very satisfying to be here, a very testing grand prix for all of us: mixed conditions and obviously with a bit of stress here and there, hard visibility, tear-off visors – the whole thing," Webber concluded. "Everything was thrown in there today, it was a tough grand prix for all of us. Clearly it's Jenson's day, he deserved the win and great points for us as a team in the constructors' championship. I'm sure it was a good race for the neutrals watching at home but a few grey hairs for us."

Finally, all three praised race control for their on-going analysis of the situation on track and timely deployment of the safety car.

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Webber wasn't given much time on the microphone, but he managed to get a few good soundbites out of limited airtime.

"I think Lewis thought the chequered flag was in Turn 3," the Australian driver said. "We made contact, I tried to give him some room. I know it's easy to clip someone but I think it was a bit clumsy that early in the race. So I lost a lot of positions. I managed to get them all back, pretty much, and then we decided to pit, obviously just to put another set of full extremes on before the suspended race. Then obviously Kobayashi and the two Renaults and di Resta - the guys that I passed already - they got me with the free pit stop, basically under the suspended race with the new set of tyres. So I had to get back past those guys which wasn't too bad but when a dry line started to appear, it's actually difficult to pull moves off because there's not much room to get down the inside.

"I think I decided to roll the dice a little bit and pop some dry tyres on.," Webber continued. "It was very much on the edge. I knew parts of the track were going to be tricky initially, and if you get on the grass, obviously, it's all over. So that tended to work out for me, gained quite a few seconds with that and then arrived on the back of Michael and we had a reasonable battle, same thing, trying to get that dry line in the last chicane. Eventually we got him, but JB arrived, he was very very very quick and I think he would ultimately - even if I got Michael early - JB would probably have picked me off as well. It was very easy to be in the wall today, make a mistake.

"It's very satisfying to be here, a very testing grand prix for all of us: mixed conditions and obviously with a bit of stress here and there, hard visibility, tear-off visors - the whole thing," Webber concluded. "Everything was thrown in there today, it was a tough grand prix for all of us. Clearly it's Jenson's day, he deserved the win and great points for us as a team in the constructors' championship. I'm sure it was a good race for the neutrals watching at home but a few grey hairs for us."

Finally, all three praised race control for their on-going analysis of the situation on track and timely deployment of the safety car.

JB: For Seb, I'm sure it was easy, sat behind the safety car, but for me, back in the pack, especially when it was very very wet, it was good to have the safety car out because I couldn't see in front of my visor. I think they timed it pretty well. I think they've got it down to a T now with understanding how long the safety car should be out, so yeah I think they did a good job.

SV: I think it was fine. Obviously they need to make the decisions for all of us, not just for one team or one driver only. It's difficult here to access the track when you have a car crashed or parts on the track which we had in the end. I think they kept everything under control and safe for us.

MW: I think they deserve huge credit. When they get it wrong, everyone kills them but today they did everything perfectly, virtually within a lap. They didn't mess around, they got on with it, did a very very good job for all of us. They had a very good understanding or feeling of the car so bloody good job from the guys up there to help us out today and yet still have a good car race, so they did a good job. For Seb, I'm sure it was easy, sat behind the safety car, but for me, back in the pack, especially when it was very very wet, it was good to have the safety car out because I couldn't see in front of my visor. I think they timed it pretty well. I think they've got it down to a T now with understanding how long the safety car should be out, so yeah I think they did a good job.

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F1 Canada Blog - No penalties for McLaren pair

The Canadian Grand Prix stewards were kept busy during Sunday's race investigating a seemingly endless string of incidents. In the immediate aftermath of the race, there was concern that Jenson Button would be stripped of his deserved win following an impressive drive from the back of the pack to the top step of the podium.

But the stewards have confirmed that neither Button nor teammate Lewis Hamilton will be issued with penalties for their parts in what were widely seen as racing incidents.

The stewards reports have been published by the FIA, and merit reading in full. They have been copied below.

The Stewards have reviewed the Incident involving Car 3 (L. Hamilton) and Car 4 (J. Button) on their 7th lap of the race. The Stewards reviewed the lines of several cars, including the two cars involved, using multiple angles of video evidence over several laps, the speed traces of both drivers, the GPS tracking data from the cars and have heard the drivers and team representatives.

The Stewards concluded that:

- Exiting Turn 13 there was a legitimate overtaking opportunity for Lewis Hamilton as his speed was greater than Jensen Button's.
- Both drivers took lines substantially similar to many of the other drivers, and did not move as far to the left as the preceding driver, Michael Schumacher. At the moment after Hamilton moved to the left to pass, Button looked into his mirror. It appears from the position of Hamilton at that moment [and is confirmed by the drivers] that Button was unlikely to have seen Hamilton.
- At the point of contact Button had not yet moved as far to the left of the track as he had on the previous lap, or that Schumacher had on that lap. The Stewards have concluded that it was reasonable for Hamilton to believe that Button would have seen him and that he could have made the passing manoeuvre. Further, the Stewards have concluded that it is reasonable to believe that Button was not aware of Hamilton's position to his left.

Therefore, the Stewards decide that this was a "racing incident" and have taken no further action.

The Stewards have reviewed video evidence and heard from the drivers and team representatives regarding the incident on Lap 38 at Turn 3 between Car 5 (F. Alonso) and Car 4 (J. Button.)

Car 5 was on an out lap having pitted. Car 4 appeared to be firmly established on the inside line prior to the entry of the corner and drove onto the kerb to avoid Car 5 on the outside.

In view of the conditions and the statements by both drivers and their team representatives, the Stewards decide that this was a "racing incident" and have taken no further action.

F1 Canada Blog - Analysing the Canadian Grand Prix

With any luck, the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve has now dried out after its Sunday soaking.

The 2011 Canadian Grand Prix is almost certain to enter F1 history as one of the most exciting of the modern era. But it didn't start well.

It felt like we saw more of the Safety Car than of the men racing for the win, what with an SC start, and then repeat visits caused by the monsoon that red-flagged the race, and accidents from Lewis Hamilton, Fernando Alonso, and Nick Heidfeld.

But when there was racing on track, it was of the purest sort. Anyone who wasn't hanging off the edge of their seat on the final lap simply wasn't paying attention.

It's somewhat difficult to analyse a race that was defined more by the weather and subsequent Safety Cars than the action on track. Sure, Jenson Button gave us the drive of his life, charging through the field from last to first. But how much of that would have happened in the dry?

The British driver qualified in P7, and were it not for a drive-through penalty and accidents with Hamilton and Alonso, it's unlikely he would have been at the back of the grid at all. Button might still have taken the win from a P7 start in a dry race, but we'll never know.

The stewards eventually decided that the accidents with both Alonso and Hamilton were both racing incidents, but – like much of the action on track last Sunday – they are incidents we probably wouldn't have seen in the dry.

Hamilton's first lap collision with Webber is a prime example of this: the move might not have worked in better conditions, but it appeared as though Hamilton overshot himself in the wet, over-confident in his ability to make the move without collision.

Same goes for Vettel's miniscule error on the final lap. The German driver ran slightly wide, and found himself off the dry racing line. Button took advantage, and slipped past for the win. But in a dry race, Vettel's mistake might not have had the same consequence. It's never ideal to slip off the racing line, but the difference in grip between wet and dry is more dramatic than the difference between clean and dirty.

One thing that does merit analysis is recent stewarding. The Canadian stewards should be praised for publicising the decision-making process that went into their judgements, particularly with regard to their published statements on Button-Hamilton and Button-Alonso.

But it does feel as though the stewards have had a heavy hand with the penalties of late.

In my notes on the Montreal race, I counted five separate occurrences of the stewards announcing investigations: Hamilton-Webber collision; Button and Hamilton speeding under the Safety Car; Button-Alonso collision; Heidfeld-di Resta collision; Rosberg-Sutil collision. There may have been more.

While speeding under the Safety Car is against the rules and automatically merits an investigation, the other incidents can all be ascribed to racing in treacherous conditions. But even in the dry, we have seen what I feel to be excessive intrusion from the stewards of late.

Manoeuvres that endanger other drivers should – of course – be investigated. But the brief moments of contact that are part and parcel of racing with overtaking? That's what the fans come to see. That's what we're here for. To punish drivers for making a move is to cheapen the sport.

Worse still is when the stewards choose to punish those who have already been punished by their actions. Paul di Resta has twice suffered the indignity of hurting his race by damaging his car in an attempted overtake and then being hurt further by a drive-through. If a driver has lost numerous positions on track or been forced to overtake as the result of a misjudged overtaking attempt, then he should not be further penalised by the stewards. Especially not if his rival managed to escape unscathed.

Sometimes, racing is just racing, and sh*t happens.

In the final judgement on the Canadian Grand Prix, special mention should go to former Regenmeister Michael Schumacher, who took the opportunity of the Montreal race to show off some of his past wet-weather form. The highlight of the German's race came in the closing stages of the afternoon, when he neatly slipped by the battling cars of Massa and Kobayashi, and popped up in P2. It looked as though the Mercedes driver was on course for the first podium of his comeback, but alas it was not to be.
