

= 2008 French Grand Prix =

The 2008 French Grand Prix (formally the XCIV Grand Prix de France) was a Formula One motor race held on 22 June 2008 at the Circuit de Nevers Magny @-@ Cours , France . This race is (to date) the last French Grand Prix . It was the eighth race of the 2008 Formula One season . The 70 @-@ lap race was won by Felipe Massa for the Ferrari team after starting from second position . Kimi Räikkönen , who started from pole position , finished second in the other Ferrari car ; Jarno Trulli was third in a Toyota .

Räikkönen and Massa both made a clean start . Renault 's Fernando Alonso , who started third , was overtaken by Trulli and BMW Sauber driver Robert Kubica . The front three of Räikkönen , Massa and Trulli maintained their positions through the first round of pit stops . On lap 30 , Räikkönen led Massa by six and a half seconds , and Trulli by 30 seconds . Just before half distance , Räikkönen 's right exhaust pipe broke , which caused the engine to lose power . Massa , in second place , began lapping quicker than Räikkönen , and he caught and passed him on lap 39 . Massa maintained his lead through the second round of pit stops , and won the race ; Räikkönen finished almost 18 seconds behind . Trulli fended off McLaren 's Heikki Kovalainen , who challenged him in the latter stages , to take third .

Massa 's win promoted him into the lead of the Drivers ' Championship for the first time in his career , overtaking Kubica . Kubica was second , two points behind Massa , while Räikkönen was third . In the Constructors ' Championship , Ferrari increased their lead to 17 points ahead of BMW Sauber , McLaren a further 16 points behind in third .

= = Report = =

= = = Background = = =

The Grand Prix was contested by 20 drivers , in ten teams of two . The teams , also known as " constructors " , were Ferrari , McLaren @-@ Mercedes , Renault , Honda , Force India @-@ Ferrari , BMW Sauber , Toyota , Red Bull @-@ Renault , Williams @-@ Toyota and Toro Rosso @-@ Ferrari . Tyre supplier Bridgestone brought two different tyre compounds to the race ; the softer of the two marked by a single white stripe down one of the grooves .

Before the race , Robert Kubica of BMW led the Drivers ' Championship , with 42 points , ahead of McLaren 's Lewis Hamilton and Ferrari 's Felipe Massa , who each had 38 points . Massa 's teammate Kimi Räikkönen was fourth , ahead of Kubica 's teammate Nick Heidfeld in fifth . In the Constructors ' Championship , Ferrari were leading with 73 points ; three points ahead of BMW Sauber with 70 points ; McLaren were a further 17 points behind them in third .

Ferrari came into the race with a long series of success at the track , having won seven of the last ten races held at Magny @-@ Cours . In 2007 , Ferrari had taken a one @-@ two , Räikkönen ahead of Massa . Massa said that it was important not to discount McLaren and BMW :

In recent years , people would say that Canada and Monaco suited McLaren better than Ferrari , while it was the other way round in France and Britain , but I don 't think that is really the case this year , as apart from any other factors , we have to consider the BMW team in this equation . This year in Monaco , Ferrari had the whole front row of the grid , even though I think we had more fuel than McLaren and in Canada our race pace was very good too . In other races we have all been very close .

In March 2007 , the Fédération Française du Sport Automobile (FFSA) stated their intention to rest the Magny @-@ Cours circuit from the Formula One world championship for the 2008 season . Despite this , the race was held in 2008 , but the race was dropped from the Formula One calendar for 2009 . As of 2015 , the Formula One World Championship had not returned to France since .

At the previous race in Canada , Hamilton had crashed into Räikkönen in the pit lane , when Räikkönen braked to stop in front of the red light at the end of the pit lane . Williams ' driver Nico Rosberg then collided into the back of Hamilton . Hamilton later said that he saw the light too late

and could not avoid hitting the Ferrari . Hamilton and Rosberg were both given ten place grid penalties for the French Grand Prix , meaning that whatever their qualifying position , they could start no better than 11th . After the penalty was given , McLaren 's CEO , Martin Whitmarsh , said that he thought the penalty was " severe " , citing a similar incident at Monaco where Raikkönen had crashed into the back of Force India 's Adrian Sutil . There , no penalty had been given . However , Rosberg said that the penalties from Canada were " deserved " . When Hamilton was asked whether the penalty would force him to change his approach , Hamilton said that " it doesn 't really . It 's a race , I 'm here to win and so I approach it the same . " " It 's going to be harder , " he added , " coming from the back , but I don 't have any doubts or any worries , I think we 're going to have a very strong package this weekend , and I think the car will be as good if not better than it was in the last race . With that pace , as long as we stay out of trouble we should be able to score some good points . "

Renault driver Nelson Piquet Jr . , who was in his first year in Formula One and had scored no points prior to this race , said that he thought that the track suited him and the car much better than previous races . BMW Sauber had taken their first victory at the previous race , but team principal Mario Theissen said that a second win was unlikely at Magny @-@ Cours .

In technical developments , BMW Sauber , Ferrari , McLaren and Toyota all revised their front wings . BMW brought both their new wing as well as the version they had used for the previous race to Magny @-@ Cours , but decided to use the revised wing , as it offered better levels of downforce . Ferrari 's wing changes aimed at improving the performance of the car 's nose hole . The nose hole , which had been introduced at the Spanish Grand Prix , aimed at creating greater levels of downforce , by channelling the airflow . Williams changed their front sidepod winglets . At the previous race , Red Bull modified their RB4 's bridge wing to prevent it from flexing , to comply with the latest rule clarifications . For Magny @-@ Cours , the team revised the central section of this element , with the aim of generating greater downforce levels .

= = = Practice and qualifying = = =

Three practice sessions were held before the Sunday race ? two on Friday , and a third on Saturday . The Friday morning and afternoon sessions each lasted 90 minutes . The third session was held on Saturday morning and lasted an hour . In the first practice session , which was held in dry conditions , Ferrari 's Felipe Massa was quickest , ahead of the McLarens of Hamilton and Kovalainen in second and third . Massa 's teammate , Räikkönen , was fourth quickest . The afternoon session , which was held in very hot conditions , saw Renault 's Fernando Alonso record the fastest lap , ahead of the two Ferrari drivers . The hot weather conditions posed several problems for the drivers , as many of the cars ran off the road , sliding through the gravel or across the asphalt . At the end of the session , a new system ? designed to limit the cars ' speeds in potentially hazardous situations ? was tested . In the third practice session , again held in dry conditions , Renault continued their strong practice performance with Piquet leading the final practice session . Red Bull 's Mark Webber was next quickest while Sebastian Vettel of Toro Rosso was third . As was the pattern for the season , the McLaren and Ferrari drivers ran heavier fuel loads in this session in preparation for the final section of qualifying .

Saturday afternoon 's qualifying session was divided into three parts . In the first 20 @-@ minute period , cars finishing 16th or lower were eliminated . The second qualifying period lasted for 15 minutes , at the end of which the fastest ten cars went into the final period , to determine their grid positions for the race . Cars failing to make the final period were allowed to be refuelled before the race but those competing in it were not , and so carried more fuel than they had done in the earlier qualifying sessions .

Räikkönen clinched Ferrari 's 200th pole position , with a time of 1 : 16 @.@ 449 . He was joined on the front row of the grid by teammate Massa . Alonso qualified third after Hamilton 's penalty moved the quicker McLaren driver to 13th ; Toyota 's Jarno Trulli qualified fourth . Kovalainen would have started from fifth , but was given a five @-@ place grid penalty for blocking Webber during qualifying and would start from 10th on the grid . Kubica , Webber , David Coulthard , Timo Glock and Piquet

rounded off the top ten . Heidfeld qualified 11th , with Vettel ahead of Hamilton in 12th , and Bourdais behind in 14th . Rosberg was next quickest , but after his penalty demoted him to the back of the grid his teammate Kazuki Nakajima took his place . The final four places went to the Honda and Force India teams , with Button qualifying ahead of Barrichello , Fisichella and Sutil . Barrichello , however , was given a penalty for changing his gearbox , meaning that he started 20th on the grid , one place behind Rosberg .

= = = Race = = =

The conditions on the grid were dry before the race , although the sky was overcast ; weather forecasts predicted rain near the end of the race . Most of the frontrunners began the race on the harder compound tyre . Rain that had fallen earlier that morning had removed some of the rubber on the track , meaning that graining , when small grains of rubber come off a tyre , was likely to be a problem ; out of the two tyre types , the harder would better cope with this . Räikkönen made a good start , retaining his first position ; Massa behind him maintained his second place . Alonso , who started third , was passed by both Trulli and Kubica , but re @-@ passed Kubica at the hairpin turn exit . Glock also made a good start , taking sixth after passing Webber . Going into the first corner , Button touched Bourdais , resulting in damage to the Honda 's front wing . Hamilton , who started 13th , passed several drivers to move into 10th by the end of lap one .

At the end of the first lap , Räikkönen led from Massa , Trulli , Alonso , Kubica , Glock and Webber . On lap five , Hamilton overtook Kovalainen to move into ninth . On the same lap , Button was forced to make an unscheduled pit stop , due to the damage he had sustained in his first corner incident with Bourdais . This dropped him to the back of the field . By the end of lap 10 , Räikkönen led Massa by 3 @.@ 2 seconds , Trulli a further 8 @.@ 5 seconds behind . On lap 13 , Hamilton was given a drive @-@ through penalty for cutting the corner of Turn Seven on lap one , and gaining an advantage . He took the penalty immediately , and re @-@ emerged in 13th position . Over the next few laps , the Ferrari drivers continued to pull out a gap on Trulli in third , lapping at around a second per lap quicker than the Toyota . On lap 16 , Räikkönen set the fastest lap of the race , a 1 : 16 @.@ 630 , stretching his lead over his teammate . Further back , Alonso , who had been running fourth , made the first scheduled pit stop , resuming 12th . Button was lapped by several drivers , due to the damage his car had sustained in his first corner incident with Bourdais , and eventually retired on lap 17 .

On lap 20 , Trulli and Kubica , then in fourth , pitted . Over the next two laps , both Räikkönen and Massa pitted . By lap 30 , Räikkönen had opened his lead to 6 @.@ 6 seconds over Massa , while Trulli was over half a minute behind him in third . Just before half distance , Räikkönen 's pace became slower , and Massa behind him caught up , passing his teammate on lap 39 . After the race , Räikkönen explained that his lack of pace was due to his car 's right exhaust pipe breaking , causing the engine to lose power . Further back , Kovalainen , who was running seventh , passed Webber to take sixth .

By lap 46 , Massa had a 10 second lead over his teammate . On the same lap , Kubica pitted from fourth , starting the next round of pit stops . Trulli pitted from third on lap 50 , and Räikkönen and Kovalainen two laps later . Massa pitted on lap 54 , and emerged 13 @.@ 4 seconds ahead of Räikkönen . Trulli kept his third position , but Kovalainen , who made up several places through the pit stops to move to fourth , was closing behind him . On lap 55 , light rain started to fall . Although it would continue to rain lightly for the next few laps , it was never heavy enough to be a problem to the drivers . By lap 58 , Kovalainen was right behind Trulli . A few laps later , the exhaust pipe which had broken earlier on Räikkönen 's car came off completely , but Räikkönen continued to race with similar lap times . Kovalainen , meanwhile , continued to try to find a way past Trulli . One lap before the end of the race , Kovalainen attempted to pass Trulli , but ran wide as Trulli defended his position .

Massa crossed the line to win the race , with Räikkönen nearly eighteen seconds behind . Trulli retained third , and took his first podium since the 2005 Spanish Grand Prix , and Toyota 's first podium since the 2006 Australian Grand Prix . Kovalainen finished fourth , ahead of Kubica ,

Webber and Piquet , who took his first ever points in Formula One . Alonso , Coulthard , Hamilton , Glock , Vettel , Heidfeld and the lapped Barrichello , Nakajima , Rosberg , Bourdais , Fisichella and Sutil were the last of the finishing drivers .

= = = Post @-@ race = = =

Massa was delighted with his race victory , saying , " A great race , a fantastic result . The win came my way because Kimi had a problem with his car and at the pace he was running , it would have been hard for me to beat him on the track . I would have been happy with second place but of course , the win makes me even happier . " After the race , Räikkönen said ,

Obviously I am a bit disappointed because I had hoped to win . Unfortunately , the right exhaust pipe broke just before half @-@ distance and the engine lost a lot of power , especially on the straight after the slow corners . After a few laps , the situation seemed better , but towards the end of the race , I ran the risk of stopping . This sort of thing can happen in racing and I have to try and look on the bright side : eight points are still a good amount and the one @-@ two finish is a great result for the team . Luckily , I had built up quite a good lead in the first part thanks to a car that was really very competitive .

Trulli said , " Today was a great race , hard and tough . We had a good pace , even if we had to battle with some cars that were quicker than us . I had to fight really hard but that is what people should expect both from myself and from Toyota . " Hamilton commented on his drive @-@ through penalty : " My drive @-@ through penalty was an extremely close call : I felt I 'd got past Vettel fairly and was ahead going into the corner . But I was on the outside and couldn 't turn @-@ in in case we both crashed , then I lost the back @-@ end and drove over the kerb . "

After BMW Sauber 's victory at the previous race , their director , Mario Theissen , said that " over the entire weekend here our package did not work perfectly " , while driver Heidfeld said that it was a " disappointing result " . Alonso said that he felt disappointed after his poor start to the race . Red Bull 's director , Christian Horner , said that their problems lay in the bad starts their drivers had made . Button , who retired during the race , commented on his collision : " I got a good start and was alongside Bourdais . I thought he was going to turn in at turn one and close the door so I pulled in behind him and then unfortunately hit him in the rear as everything slowed down for the corner . I could feel that there was something broken at the front of the car as there was an air coming in from the front , but the car was driveable and I was staying with the back of the pack so I continued . We replaced the nose but the bargeboards had been pulled off and the car had become undriveable so I had to retire . " Piquet scored his first points in Formula One in the race , having failed to score up to that point . He said that he was happy , and hoped that the team could " continue like this for the rest of the season " .

After the race , Massa moved into the lead of the Drivers ' Championship , on 48 points , taking the Championship lead for the first time in his Formula One career . Kubica lost the lead of the Drivers ' Championship , falling two points behind Massa . Räikkönen moved ahead of Hamilton , on 43 points , while Hamilton was five points further behind . Heidfeld remained fifth . Before the race , Ferrari had been just three points ahead of BMW in the Constructors ' Championship ; after the race , Ferrari moved into a comfortable 17 point advantage . McLaren made up one point on BMW , although they were still 16 points behind .

= = Classification = =

= = = Qualifying = = =

^ 1 Nico Rosberg and Lewis Hamilton docked ten places on the grid for the race after causing a collision with Kimi Räikkönen in the previous round , the Canadian Grand Prix .

^ 2 Heikki Kovalainen docked five places for blocking Mark Webber in qualifying .

^ 3 Rubens Barrichello penalised five places on the grid for gearbox change .

== Race ==

= Championship standings after the race =

Note : Only the top five positions are included for both sets of standings .